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SPIRITUALITY

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NEWS

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Inside This Edition

**HOLY TRINITY AS THE PERFECT COMMUNION OF
MUTUAL SELF-GIVING AND RECEIVING PERSONS:
TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF JEAN CORBON**

Dr. Grace Koovayil SD 107

**ISAAC THE SYRIAN:
PREACHER OF GOD'S LOVE AND MERCY**

Dr. Rincy Maria CMC 121

THE *WARDĀ* ON MARY, THE VIRGIN MOTHER

Fr. Jacob Kizhakkeveedu 132

**SPIRITUAL TWIN:
TOWARDS A THOMASINE SPIRITUALITY**

Manuel Karimpanackal MST 148

NEWS 155

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Editorial

God's communication is God's self-giving. When he communicates, he communicates himself. This is his self-gift, which is the fruit of his free decision. Thus God's self-gift is a gratuitous self-giving. In the first article of this issue of *Christian Orient*, Sr. Grace Koovayil SD presents us with a beautiful exposition of Jean Corbon's theory of Holy Trinity, basing mainly on two of his works: *L'expérience Chrétienne dans la Bible* and *Liturgie de Source*. In contrast to the traditional western understanding, Corbon views the interrelatedness of the three Persons of the Trinity as a perfect communion of mutual self-giving and receiving. God the Father is the source of this self-giving. Son and the Spirit wholly proceed from the Father and each one is eternally a self-gift to the other two. In the inner Trinitarian communion, "each person is gift and acceptance of gift." Genuine love consists in giving oneself entirely to the other. This intimate and interpersonal relationship among the three Persons of the Trinity is what is meant by *perichoresis* or mutual indwelling.

This article reminds us of Andrei Rublev's famous icon of Holy Trinity. Therein the three Persons are depicted as expressing movement towards the Other. What Corbon writes in *Liturgie de Source*, 22, looks like an explanation of Rublev's icon: "For this God [Father], who is the creative source [origin] of all that exists, is eternally a source within the Trinity itself. The Father is there the source [origin] of the Word, which he speaks, and

the Breath, which he breathes. But he is thereby also the source [origin] of a communion, for his Son is wholly 'toward' him, offering in his reflected glory all that he is and all that the Father has 'begotten' in him; the Father's Spirit is wholly 'from' him and by his acceptance gives back the gift that he is and that 'proceeds' from the Father... In the communion of the living God, the mystery of each person is to be for the other..." This trinitarian theology of Corbon of the mutual self-giving and receiving of the three Persons is very well brought out by Sr. Grace.

Sr. Ricny Maria CMC, in her article, "Isaac the Syrian: Preacher of God's Love and Mercy", elucidates with the help of authentic sources how the seventh century Syriac Father Isaac of Niniveh develops a theology of God's love, a love that is revealed in the acts of creation and continued providential care. This love of God is manifested in His mercy and compassion. The image and likeness of this God who is love and mercy invites us to be merciful – a timely call in the Year of Mercy.

Fr. Jacob Kizhakkevedu's article, "The *Wardâ* on Mary, the Virgin Mother", is an excellent analysis of the development of Mariology in light of six Syriac hymns from a collection of the thirteenth century, called *The Book of Wardâ*. This study brings to light how this collection reflects the Mariological understanding of great Syriac Fathers like Aphrahat, Mar Aprem and Mar Narsai and

has influenced the Mariological tradition of the East Syriac Church.

This issue of Christian Orient concludes with "Spiritual Twin: Towards a Thomasine Spirituality" by Manuel Karimpanackal MST. The author convincingly argues why Thomas

was considered to be the 'twin' of Jesus. The confession of Thomas before the risen Lord, "My Lord and My God" expresses a great faith-insight that equates Jesus with God himself. After the example of Thomas every Christian is called to be a twin of Jesus.

Fr. Andrews Mekkattukunnel

Section Editor

Holy Trinity as the Perfect Communion of Mutual Self-giving and Receiving Persons:

Trinitarian Theology of Jean Corbon

Dr. Grace Koovayil SD

Introduction

The traditional Western trinitarian doctrine rests upon the conviction that the temporal missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit disclose the inner mystery of the Trinity. The mission of the Son is from the Father and the mission of the Spirit is from the Father and the Son. Based on this understanding of the economy of salvation, the traditional Western theologians move to the conclusion that, in the Godhead itself, the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This traditional theory, first developed by Augustine and later complimented by Aquinas and others, considers the Trinity as the Father begetting the Son; and the Holy Spirit, who is the love between them, proceeds from the Father and the Son. At this juncture, Jean Corbon, a bi-ritual theologian, appears as a significant exponent of trinitarian theology.

Jean Corbon was born in Paris in 1924. He entered the Congregation of the White Fathers in 1941. He was ordained a priest in Carthage on 24 March 1951. After obtaining a licentiate degree in Scripture from the Biblical Institute in Rome in 1954, he began

to teach at the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo, Egypt. In 1956, Corbon went to Lebanon, where he found himself spiritually at home. There he made a fabulous study of the early Fathers of the Church which strongly influenced his spiritual and theological life. Eventually he was incardinated into the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Beirut and spent the rest of his life in Lebanon where he proved himself to be an ecumenical expert. Corbon served as translator and theologian at the Second Vatican Council, and was active and influential in ecumenical efforts. He was professor of Dogmatic Theology and Ecumenism at two universities: the University of St. Joseph in Beirut and the University of the Holy Spirit in Kalsik, Lebanon. From 1986 to 1996 he served as a member of the International Theological Commission. While he was working as a member of the International Commission for theological dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, he served also as one of the principal authors of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. From 1991 to 1998, Corbon worked as a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council

of Churches and as a member of the Joint Working Group between that body and the Holy See. For fourteen years prior to his death Corbon edited the bulletin of the ecumenical commission called *Courier Œcuménique du Moyen-Orient* and collaborated closely with *Proche Orient Chrétien* as a member of the editorial board. His influence in the Balamand Document of 1993 between the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church was commendable. He died in Beirut in 2001, leaving a rich heritage of theological reflection for future generation.

Corbon is a theologian of quite outstanding stature, one who deserves to be ranked alongside the great theologians of the last century. That he has only rarely been recognized as such is largely due to the fact that he was living in the East. Corbon's three major books are entitled: *L'expérience Chrétienne dans la Bible* (1963), *L'Église des Arabes* (1975), and *Liturgie de Source* (1980). The two theological works *L'expérience Chrétienne dans*

la Bible and *Liturgie de Source* draw heavily on Scripture and Patristic sources of Latin, Greek and Syriac traditions.¹

1 Limitations of the Traditional Understanding

The traditional Western conception of the Trinity is inadequate in certain respects. According to David Coffey, this model does not express the goal of God's self-communication, which is the return of humanity and all creation to the Father. Edward Kilmartin argues that the traditional model fails to clarify the purpose of the spiration of the Spirit. "The direction is toward an infinite void."² Thomas Weinandy observes that the main weakness lies in the inadequate conception of the role or function of the Spirit within trinitarian life.³

Besides these limitations, one can clearly notice that the traditional theory does not sufficiently express the personal (hypostatic) character of the third Person of the Trinity.

¹ J. Corbon, *L'Expérience Chrétienne dans la Bible* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1963); Engl. trans: *Path to Freedom: Christian Experiences and the Bible*. Trans. Violet Nevile (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969); and *Liturgie de Source* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980); Engl. trans: *The Wellspring of Worship*. Trans. Mathew O'Connell (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).

² E.J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy I: Theology and Practice* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1988), 131. Kilmartin embraced David Coffey's bestowal model of the Trinity. If the guiding principle of the traditional model is the Johannine theology, the bestowal model of Coffey turns to the ascending approach which presents the Holy Spirit not only as the consequence of Jesus' saving work, but as intimately involved in this work from the very beginning of Incarnation. Drawing on the bestowal model of Coffey and Augustine's vision of the Spirit as love between the Father and the Son, Kilmartin establishes his view. Specifically speaking, the bestowal model holds that the Father bestows the Father's love on to the Son, the Son returns this love, fully bestowing the Spirit on the Father.

³ Cf. T.G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1995), 7-8. He criticizes both Western and Eastern trinitarian thoughts. For the West, the Father and the Son play active role but the Spirit assumes a passive function. The linear view of Eastern thought undermines the Orthodox notion of *perichoresis*. (Hereafter *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*).

Although it rightly maintains that the three Persons are eternal and equal, the theory does not succeed in adequately explaining the consubstantiality of the three Persons. More precisely, it does not express the reasoning of how the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son. Let us be precise. Augustine understands the Holy Spirit as gift (*donum*) or as love itself (*caritas*), and specifically as the mutual love between the Father and the Son.⁴ This Pneumatology is deficient because the emphasis on the Father-Son relationship is at the expense of the personhood of the Spirit. That is, while the Holy Spirit is mutual love, within the Godhead neither the Father nor the Son seem to love the Holy Spirit as a person. When the Spirit is conceived merely as love or gift shared by the Father and the Son, the Spirit is reduced to an impersonal and passive bond between them and thus, appears less clearly as a person. The New Testament does not agree with this kind of depersonalization of the Spirit, instead, it portrays the Spirit as a person who speaks, reminds, teaches, guides, inspires and as one who feels grief. "For it will not be you who are speaking but the Holy Spirit" (Mk 13:11). "The Spirit said to Philip, 'Go and join up with that chariot'" (Acts 8:29). "The Spirit told me to accompany them without discriminating" (Acts 11:12). There are many other occasions that exhibit that the Spirit speaks (Acts 10:19; 13:2; 20:23; 21:11; 28:25;

Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 22:17). "Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple" (Lk 2:27). "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph 4:30). Only a living person can feel grief. These biblical references clearly show that the revelation about the Holy Spirit presents him as a living Person and not an impersonal gift.⁵ The above mentioned deficiencies of the established model cannot be ignored. In this context, Jean Corbon presents an alternative trinitarian theory of mutual gift and reception. Although he does not propose it as a new trinitarian model, it sheds much light on the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity.

2 Corbon's Theory of the Trinity: Perfect Communion of Persons in Love

In contrast to the traditional theory, Jean Corbon presents a considerably different and innovative trinitarian theory of mutual self-giving and reception, offering a refreshing insight on the Trinity. This analysis largely depends on the two books of Corbon namely, *L'expérience Chrétienne dans la Bible* (1963) and *Liturgie de Source* (1980).

He conceives God as a living dynamic personal Being. More specifically, his thesis concerns the interrelations of the three Persons of the immanent Trinity. "The divine Unity is not the solitude of isolation but communion, *koinonia*."⁶ He is profoundly

⁴ Cf. Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate* 15: 17.27-18.32; *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 50A, 501-510.

⁵ Augustine does not conceive the Holy Spirit as an impersonal gift. But his trinitarian theology does not explain it explicitly.

⁶ J. Corbon, "Catholic Principles of Ecumenism in the Middle East," *One in Christ* 25 (1989), 116.

aware of the intimate and inseparable link between the theology and economy. Maintaining the distinctions of immanent and economic Trinity Corbon gives a clear vision of the immanent Trinity. Let us consider Corbon's words:

For this God [Father], who is the creative source [origin] of all that exists, is eternally a source within the Trinity itself. The Father is there the source [origin] of the Word, which he speaks, and the Breath, which he breathes. But he is thereby also the source [origin] of a communion, for his Son is wholly 'toward' him, offering in his reflected glory all that he is and all that the Father has 'begotten' in him; the Father's Spirit is wholly 'from' him and by his acceptance gives back the gift that he is and that 'proceeds' from the Father. In the communion of the Blessed Trinity no person is named for himself. There is neither 'in itself' nor 'for itself': terms that among us are signs of barrenness and death. In the communion of the living God, the mystery of each person is to be for the other: 'O! Thou!'⁷

The solid theology of this passage is one of the elucidating expressions of all three Persons of the Trinity in equal footing. Instead of dealing with the classical, philosophical explanation, Corbon moves directly to the

biblical testimony to illustrate this trinitarian mystery. Asserting the primacy of the Father within the immanent Trinity, Corbon holds that the Father is the source or origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Another remarkable point is the significance he ascribes to the Person of the Holy Spirit. "*The Father's Spirit is wholly 'from' him and by his acceptance gives back the gift that he is...*" He attempts to elucidate that God's communication is God's self-giving and receiving. This is logically correct. His conviction that God is not composite does not come from the philosophical background but from the Johannine affirmation that God is light.⁸ There is no need of further explanation to comprehend that the light is not composite. Since God has no parts, if he communicates, it must be the communication of God's self. Now, this self-gift of God is not a necessity in God but is a fruit of his free decision, hence, for Corbon, God's self-gift is God's gratuitous self-giving. This is true of the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity. Ultimately, the origin of this self-giving is the Father.⁹ From his theology of inner-trinitarian mutual self-giving, it is possible to develop a model of the Trinity which addresses the fact of distinct but simultaneous, or better, eternal processions of the Son and the Spirit. In his view, the Son and the Spirit proceed wholly from the Father and each one is eternally self-gift to the other two. That is, in the communion of Triune God, "[E]ach person

⁷ J. Corbon, *Liturgie de Source*, 22; *Wellspring of Worship*, 30. (Hereafter French original as *Liturgie* and English translation as *Wellspring*).

⁸ Cf. J. Corbon, *L'Expérience Chrétienne dans la Bible*, 146; *Path to Freedom*, 146. (Hereafter French original as *L'Expérience* and English translation as *Path*).

⁹ Cf. J. Corbon, *Liturgie*, 23; *Wellspring*, 32.

is gift and acceptance of gift, never varying yet not motionless; each is an élan that is enamored of the Other but in pure transparency; each is joy given gratuitously and accepted freely.”¹⁰ For Corbon, each person in the Trinity is “Thou” in the same sense. In the following pages we shall try to interpret this original thesis with some explanations in order to underpin this theory with scriptural accounts.

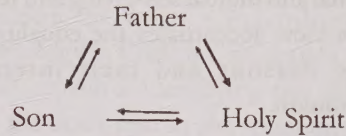
2.1 Mutual Self-giving and Reception Theory: The Dynamic of Gift and Response as Theological Model

Corbon envisages the Trinity as the communion of Persons in mutual loving self-giving. The Father gratuitously gives himself to the Son and the Spirit which is the origin and pattern of gift. The Son freely gives himself to the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit gives himself to the Father and the Son without reserve. Each one freely accepts the self-gift of the Other given gratuitously. This is not just a description of an activity within the Trinity, but a theory or model of the Trinity against which we can develop theological reflections. This theory demands some elucidation. Following are the three important suppositions of this theory.

2.1.1 The Trinity Is Consubstantial because Each Person Is Eternally Self-gift for the Other Two

The eternal self-gift and acceptance of each other makes the Trinity essentially

consubstantial. This notion makes the same essence and nature theory more intelligible. In order to facilitate our investigation, let us consider the following graphic presentation:



This approach safeguards the classical understanding of the consubstantiality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Corbon writes that in the Trinity each Person is to ‘be toward’ the other in a unique communion which is unity.¹¹

Has this trinitarian vision scriptural background? Corbon believes that his thesis is supported by the biblical witness. To support his argument Corbon weaves together the key passages of the First Epistle of John which affirms that God is light (1 Jn 1:5) and love (1 Jn 4:8). In his own words:

God is not only personal, he is the fullness of personal being, the communion of three persons in perfect oneness. He is not composite, he is pure light (1 Jn 1-2). Communion between the human persons can reach only a certain degree of unity, never perfect oneness. In God this oneness of light is possible because he is love (1 Jn 3-4), and each person is wholly ‘toward’ the other.¹²

Elsewhere he says that “God is love because he is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...

¹⁰ J. Corbon, *Liturgie*, 23; *Wellspring*, 31.

¹¹ J. Corbon, *L'Expérience*, 53-54; *Path*, 51.

¹² J. Corbon, *L'Expérience*, 146; *Path*, 146.

And yet God is love because he is the communion of three Persons in unity.”¹³ Then, for him, the three Persons of the Trinity are constituted in their unity because they exist in eternal and mutual self-giving and receiving. Such a view accentuates the equality of the divine Persons and their interrelated communion.

2.1.2 *The Father Is the Origin of the Self-gift and the Father's Giving is Self-giving*

This premise implies that the Father begins the Self-gift in the begetting of the Word (Son) and spiration of the Breath (Spirit), which are simultaneous but distinctive.

The Gospel of John implicitly proposes that the *origin* of all divine communion is the Father. “Now they know that everything *you have given me* is from you” (Jn 17:7); “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me” (John 7:16); “All mine are yours” (Jn 17:10). What the Father *gave* to his Son is not only what he has but what he is; self-giving. That is why Jesus says: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9); “All that the Father has is mine” (Jn 16:15) and “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30). In this perspective we can say that in the Trinity, the origin of life *ad intra* and life *ad extra* (economy) is the Father.

Logically considering, since God is not a composite, what God the Father gives to the Son must be himself and not something or someone other than he is. This is true of

the Spirit also. This reasoning is attested by Jesus' own teaching. What Jesus says about himself regarding the authority of his words, he says about the Holy Spirit also: “I speak just as the Father has told me” (Jn 12:50); “...for he [Holy Spirit] will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears” (Jn 16:13). The Father spirates or breathes forth the Spirit at the begetting of his only begotten Son. This dynamic is simultaneous and eternal. Logically speaking, since both the Word and the Spirit are eternal or atemporal, generation and procession are not one after another, but together.

Edward Siecienski succinctly puts it: “Without denying that all three persons of the Trinity are active at every stage of salvation history, the New Testament testifies to a certain ‘priority’ of the Father, from whom the Son and the Spirit comes and to whom all things on earth are drawn.”¹⁴

2.1.3 *Each Person Receives and Returns the Self-gift of the Other*

The Holy Spirit receives and returns the self-gift of the Father and the Son; likewise, the Son receives and returns the self-gift of the Father and the Spirit; similarly, the Father receives and returns the self-gift of the Son and the Spirit.

In the economy, the Spirit's self-giving to the Son is explicit in the baptism account of Jesus (Lk 3:22). But we have no clear testimony from the Scripture that the Son gives

¹³ J. Corbon, *L'Expérience*, 146; *Path*, 146.

¹⁴ A.E. Siecienski, *The Filioque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 31.

himself to the Spirit. Nevertheless an implicit Scriptural foundation for this argument we see in the following verse: "He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify me, because he will *receive* (λήμψεται) what is from me and disclose it to you. All that the Father has is mine; this is why I said that he will *take* (λαμβάνει) what is from me and disclose it to you" (Jn 16:14-15).¹⁵ The Greek words (λήμψεται) and (λαμβάνει) come from the same root verb λαμβάνω which means receive or take (make one's own).¹⁶ Thus, one might say that the Holy Spirit *receives/takes* what belongs to the Son and the Father. Now, we may argue that the Holy Spirit takes/receives what is common for the Father and the Son – divine nature. Since God is not composite, what the Spirit receives or takes from the Son cannot be anything but his very self. Then, what is common for the Father and the Son is common for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Since the same verb has two meanings (*receive/take*), we can say that it is not just a passive reception, (nor an active acquisition/taking), but an active and free reception. Then, each Person in the Trinity can say: "All mine are yours and yours are mine" (Jn 17:10). Further, we can find another answer from the point of view of the Creed. In it we profess that the Spirit spoke through the prophets. How could he speak the Word

through the prophets if he did not have the Word in him? Corbon's theology of mutual self-giving and receiving can help us to understand better the eternal relation between the Son and the Spirit. Thus, there is an integral connection between Christology and Pneumatology in Corbon's trinitarian vision. We shall explain it identifying two different points: the Son's part in the spiration of the Spirit and the Spirit's place in the generation of the Son.

a) The Son has a Role in the Spiration of the Spirit

Corbon does not directly enter into the dispute of the *filioque*, but a promising spark is to be found in his theological approach. He holds firmly: "The Spirit who proceeds from the Father and rests on his beloved Son eternally."¹⁷ The New Testament accentuates that Christ is a recipient of the Spirit at his baptism. The Son receives the Spirit from the Father and also emits the Spirit which he has received (cf. Acts 2:33). Then, the Father and the Son are the consubstantial source (the Son is consubstantial with the Father because the Father gives himself fully to the Son) of the procession of the Spirit. Although the Spirit does not derive hypostatic origination from the Son, his issuing forth from the Father presupposes the Son's existence. In other

¹⁵ These scriptural verses are taken from George E. Beasley-Murray ed. *Word Biblical Commentary: John 36* (Texas: Word Books, 1987), 267. We do so because we find that this commentary gives a more accurate translation of this verse than what appears in the *New Jerusalem Bible* or the *New Revised Standard Version*.

¹⁶ Cf. J.H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 370-371.

¹⁷ "Cet Esprit qui procède du Père et repose sur son fils bien-aimé éternellement..." J. Corbon, *Cela s'appelle l'aurore: homélies liturgiques* (Burtin: Éditions des Beatitudes, 2004), 387. This is a collection of his eucharistic homilies.

words, the Father who spirates or breathes the Spirit is eternally the Father of the Son. Thus, in line with Eastern theology, we may hold the issuing forth of the Spirit (*ἐκπορεύεσθαι*) from the Father and his proceeding (*προϊέναι*) from or through the Son.

To put the matter differently, the Father spirates the Spirit at the begetting of the Son. This Spirit *reposes on* the Son eternally. Since the Spirit *reposes on* the Son eternally, he becomes eternally the Spirit of the Son. This view helps to hold firmly the monarchy of the Father and helps to comprehend reasonably the relation between the Spirit and the Son. Doctrinally speaking, the Spirit is equally and perfectly consubstantial with the Father and the Son. Then, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father whose substance belongs to the Son and to the Spirit as well. That is, the same substance belongs to all of them together as well as to each one in particular. Since the Trinity is eternal, no one Person existed before any other. Interpreted in this sense it would appear that both the expressions 'from the Father and the Son,' and 'from the Father through the Son,' are in order. It does not agree with the view that the procession of the Spirit is from the 'Father and the Son', if the Spirit is excluded from

the Father-Son relation. So also it does not agree with the view that the Spirit proceeds from the 'Father through the Son', if the Trinity is not understood perichoretically. Thus, these three positions regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit – from the Father, from the Father and the Son, from the Father through the Son – are to be considered orthodox expressions of the Christian faith, provided one first admits the consubstantiality of three Persons in one God.¹⁸

From the above explanation, we can understand that the Spirit's first principle of origin is the Father but he proceeds from the Father and (through) the Son eternally. Augustine clarifies that the Spirit proceeds principally (*principaliter*) from the Father.¹⁹ Since the Spirit *reposes on* the Son eternally, it can be understood that he proceeds through or from the Son accordingly. In this sense, the doctrine of the *filioque* does not appear to contradict the monarchy of the Father as many Eastern theologians suppose. Since the procession and self-gift are eternal, and what is communicated is the same essence of God, one can say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *with/through/and* the Son.

¹⁸ Confessing the *filioque* without affirming the consubstantiality will be a heresy because it will be equal to say that 'there was a time when the Spirit was not'. It will subordinate the Spirit. Since the Catholic theology sufficiently affirms the consubstantiality, the *filioque* cannot be considered a heresy.

¹⁹ "Filius autem de patre natus est, et spiritus sanctus de patre principaliter, et ipso sine ullo intervallo temporis dante, communiter de utroque procedit." Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate* 15: 26, 47; *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 50A, 527.

b) The Spirit has a place in the begetting of the Son

Although Corbon never holds *spirituque*,²⁰ his theology attributes something similar to the Spirit, albeit in a different manner. In Corbon's theory, since the Holy Spirit is eternally consubstantial with the Father, the Spirit must be present in the generation of the Son. But the Spirit is not to be understood as another Son of the Father but as his Spirit. While the Son does not derive hypostatic origination from the Spirit, his generation from the Father presupposes the Spirit's existence with the Father by virtue of his eternal consubstantiality with the Father. This does not mean that the Son is generated also from the Spirit (*spirituque*), but the Spirit is eternally present with the Father who generates the Son. Accordingly, the Spirit proceeds conjointly with the Son on whom he rests. Can this opinion be true? Does this vision go in line with Revelation and teachings of the Church? Reconsidering the axiom that the temporal missions reveal the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit, if we make an investigation of the trinitarian theology of the New Testament, we get a broad vision. Along with John's Gospel, the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Epistles of Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews provide a firm platform upon which we find the Spirit presented as a constant companion of the Son from the Incarnation to his Ascension. If the scriptural

data implies that the Spirit has a role in the actualization of the Son's temporal procession, the same must be true of the Word's eternal generation.

While looking at the New Testament in order to find a scriptural ground for the Spirit's role at the Incarnation, one gets a rather clear picture. "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14). This Johannine assertion receives further elucidation in the infancy narrative of Luke and Mathew which affirms that Jesus' conception took place by the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore [dio.] the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35); "... she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18); "... Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20). If the saying 'economy reflects theology' is correct, on the basis of these texts, one can argue that the Holy Spirit has a place in the eternal generation of the Son as he has a place in the Incarnation. It does not mean that the Spirit is the Father of Jesus, instead, God the Father acts through the Holy Spirit at the eternal generation of the Son just as the Father acted through the Spirit at the Incarnation of the eternal Word in the womb of the Virgin Mary. In the Creed we profess this in the following way: *he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.*

²⁰ The concept *spirituque* refers to the thinking that the Son comes from the Father and the Spirit. Cf. P. Evdokimov, *L'Esprit Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 71-72; J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 71.

The Spirit was active not only at Jesus' birth from Virgin Mary but accompanied him throughout his earthly ministry. According to Corbon, the Spirit reposes on the Son eternally. It is the Spirit of God descending on Jesus at his baptism to anoint him.²¹ All the Gospels testify that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus as a dove at his baptism: "... and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'" (Lk 3:22); "...and when Jesus had been baptized, ... he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him" (Mt 3:16); "...and just as he was coming out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him" (Mk 1:10). "And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him'" (Jn 1:32). These texts suggest that the Father gave the Spirit to the Son to anoint him. Or the Father anointed him with the Spirit. In other words, the Father bestows the Spirit on to the Son. Jesus himself, referring to the prophecy of Isaiah, acknowledges publically that the Spirit of God rests upon him: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news..." (Lk 4:18). Thus, Jesus presents the Holy Spirit as one who is present in him and helps him during his life and ministry.

According to the Synoptic Gospels, it is the Spirit who leads Jesus into the desert to

be tempted by the devil (Lk 4:1); he returns from the desert armed with the power of the Spirit (Lk 4:14). The Spirit continued to endow his actions with power (Mt 12:28, Lk 1:20). He warns against blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Lk 12:10, Mk 3:22-30). Again, we see Jesus rejoicing in the Holy Spirit (Lk 10:21). According to the Letter to the Hebrews, the Spirit is present at the hour of his death because Christ, "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God" (Heb 9:14). Finally, Apostle Peter holds that the Spirit is active also in the moment of his resurrection. "He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). This view is obvious in the following words of Corbon:

The irruption of the Spirit during the 'times' that preceded this day [Pentecost] are countless. They occur throughout the economy of salvation. They even give the economy its continuity, at once increasingly carnal and increasingly spiritual, until the Spirit effects the coming of the Word in flesh and then establishes him as the Lord at the Father's right hand.²²

Therefore, it is clear that in the accomplishment of the mission entrusted by the Father, Jesus had the constant accompaniment of the Holy Spirit.

There are other theologians who propose similar views. In 1966, Jesuit theologian Edward Yarnold suggested something similar in the light of the Lukan

²¹ Cf. J. Corbon, *Liturgie*, 31; *Wellspring*, 40.

²² J. Corbon, *Liturgie*, 53; *Wellspring*, 70.

writings. He holds that Luke's writings "imply (without explicitly formulating) a trinitarian economy in which the Son is begotten by the Father not directly but through the intermediacy of the Spirit."²³

To shed more light on this question we draw on the assessment of Thomas Weinandy. In 1995, he proposes that "within the trinity the Father begets the Son in or by the Holy Spirit, who proceeds then from the Father as the one in whom the Son is begotten."²⁴ Unlike the previous trinitarian models which depend heavily on the Johannine tradition, he builds his theory mainly on the Synoptic Gospel accounts of the Holy Spirit. He argues that the "depiction of the Father begetting his Son in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit becomes, I believe, a temporal icon of his eternally begetting the Son by the Holy Spirit."²⁵ He notes that at Jesus' baptism as the Spirit descends upon Jesus, the Father declares him to be his beloved Son. Therefore, he reasons that "as the Spirit conforms Jesus to be the faithful Son on earth, so the Spirit conforms him as the Son within the Trinity, so as to be eternally pleasing to the Father."²⁶ He demonstrates

further that his reconstruction of the Trinity is firmly rooted in the Scripture.

There is no doubt that the mission of the Spirit is inseparable from that of the Son. We see that it is the Spirit who spoke through the prophets, inspired the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16), announced and realized the coming of the Son in our flesh and continues his work of salvation until his second coming in glory. Corbon undoubtedly asserts that the entire mission of the Holy Spirit is *with and for Christ*.²⁷ This view requires further clarification. For him, the Holy Spirit's mission is more than actualizing the accomplished mission of Christ in the Church. That is, in the economy, the Spirit's mission is *with Christ, in Christ and for Christ*. Further, it can be said that the Spirit precedes the Son in the mystery of Incarnation, whereas the incarnate Word is the precursor of the full gift of the Spirit to the Church. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit, who remained with and for Christ in his earthly ministry, continues his work *with, in and for Christ's body, the Church*. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot

²³ Cf. E. Yarnold, "The Trinitarian Implications of Luke and Acts," *The Heythrop Journal* 7 (1966), 1. He provides many other instances from the Scripture to substantiate his theory. He notes that the creative activity of the Spirit is anticipated in the Old Testament itself. In the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis the Spirit of God hovers like a bird over the waters (Gen 1:2). The book of Job says, "The Spirit of God has made me, and breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4) and "If he should take back his spirit to himself and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust" (Job 34:14-15).

²⁴ T.G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, ix.

²⁵ T.G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, 42.

²⁶ T.G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, 28.

²⁷ Cf. J. Corbon, "Prier dans la Trinité Sainte," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 24 (1999), 38.

receive, because it neither sees nor knows him. You know him, because *he abides with you*, and *he will be in you*" (Jn 14:17).

The key point is this: the Holy Spirit is eternal and is consubstantial with the Father. If he is consubstantial with the Father, he was present with the Father at the generation of the only unbegotten Son of the Father. Otherwise, if the Spirit is not of the same substance or essence of the Father and the Son, he cannot be regarded as God and that in turn will imply subordination of the Spirit. At this point we shall briefly consider the aspect of consubstantiality of the Trinity.

2.2 Consubstantiality and *Perichoresis*

The Church's faith in the consubstantiality of the Triune God is implicitly expressed in the small doxology. *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.*²⁸ This simple but dense doxology of the fourth century puts the Persons of the Trinity in equal footing. Although the Nicene-Constantinople Creed does not explicitly say that the Spirit is consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father and the Son, it expresses the same idea describing the Spirit as *the Lord, the Giver of Life*; and as *adored and glorified with the Father and the Son*.

This insertion was intended against the Pneumatomachians who were denying the divinity of the Holy Spirit.²⁹

Corbon's trinitarian theology clearly manifests his reliance on the Greek theological concept of *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις). Drawing ideas from Gregory Nazianzen, Pseudo-Cyril and Maximus, John of Damascus was the first father who explained this theology explicitly in both trinitarian theology and Christology.³⁰ John stresses the identity of substance in God and the *perichoresis* in each other, which presupposes the significance of their threeness. Without this presupposition, their coinherence or interpenetration would be meaningless. Maximus succinctly puts it:

In becoming incarnate the Word of God teaches us the mystical knowledge of God because he shows us in himself the Father and the Holy Spirit. For the full Father and the full Holy Spirit are essentially and completely in the full Son, even the Incarnate Son, without being themselves incarnate.³¹

In the final analysis, Corbon's view founded on the patristic idea, establishes more evidently the consubstantiality of the Spirit

²⁸ It was Basil of Caesarea who first used this formula especially in the liturgy in the fourth century against the Arians and Pneumatomachians in order to safeguard the equality of the three Persons in the Trinity.

²⁹ Cf. L.D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 125-126.

³⁰ John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, 1:8; *Sources Chrétiennes* 535, 163-180. For a detailed exposition of the theme cf. V. Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991), 53-65.

³¹ Maximus the Confessor, *Expositio Orationis Dominicae*, 87-90; *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* 23: 31-32. English translation is from G. Berthold, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 103.

with the Father and the Son. The testimony of the Scripture is in harmony with this view: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (Jn 14:11); "...Father, you are in me and I am in you" (Jn 17:21); All mine are yours and yours are mine (Jn 17:10); "And by this we know that he [Christ] abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us" (1 Jn 3:24); "Then the Lord spoke to you *out of the fire* [Spirit?]" (Deut 4:12, 5: 4). On the basis of the above study, it is possible to uphold a 'mutual self-giving and receiving theory' of the Trinity: *perichoresis* (each divine person is contained in the other). Thus, all three divine Persons are intimately in relation with the other two by virtue of this communion.

2.3 Implications of Corbon's Trinitarian Model

Corbon's trinitarian thesis is indeed a very valuable contribution to the renewed theological discussion of the Trinity. He offers not just a review of the traditional perichoretic theory but also a substantial and constructive thesis on the Christian doctrine of God. His theory has particular relevance for the theology of the Holy Spirit. It noticeably expresses the intimate connection of Christology and Pneumatology. He notes that in no way the mission of the Spirit supersedes the mission of the Son. At the same time the mission of the Spirit is not superfluous since everything is already accomplished by Christ.

Rather, Christ affirms "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you" (Jn 16:7). As a matter of fact the missions of the Son and the Spirit are intrinsically interdependent. His theology implies that the Spirit, who is present and active in Christ's temporal-historical conception in the Virgin Mary, is present at the eternal generation of the Son and at his eucharistic self-giving to believers.

The soteriological implication of Corbon's trinitarian theology is this: a Christian is drawn into the life of communion of the self-giving God and thereby divinized. The Father attracts us, the Spirit helps us to respond to this divine initiative and the Son allows us to be incorporated into his body; it is a call to live in communion with the Trinity forever. This trinitarian theology of free giving and receiving has ecumenical implications as well. While the ecumenical relations involve striving for agreement and acting in common, these relations are assessed ultimately in terms of love and gift.³² Thus, it can be well stated that Corbon's vision of the Trinity is a significant contribution to the contemporary meditation on the mystery of Trinity in doctrinal and ecumenical circles. As Lopes puts it: "Corbon's work can provide an excellent theological basis for ecumenical conversation on the mystery of the Trinity..."³³

³² Cf. R.N. McMichael, "That They may All Be One: The Gift of Divine Unity and the Future of Ecumenical Relations," *Pro Ecclesia* 8 (1999), 266.

³³ S.J. Lopes, *From the Trinity to the Eucharist: Towards a Trinitarian Theology of the Sacrifice of Christ and its Representation in the Eucharist of the Church* (Rome: Gregorian University, 2005), 109.

Conclusion

There arises an important question: is Corbon's trinitarian theology in conformity with the teachings of the Church? This model of trinitarian theology denies nothing the Magisterium has already defined. Instead, it elucidates the teachings of the Councils for better comprehension of them. Specifically speaking, the consubstantiality of the Trinity is part of the definitive teachings of the Church, but it is not clearly articulated in the

existing trinitarian models. In this context, Corbon reformulates the trinitarian doctrine in such a way that the consubstantiality of the Trinity is easily intelligible. Considering the reality of the marginal treatment of the Holy Spirit to that of the Father and the Son in the existing trinitarian models, the present theologians may draw upon the insight of Corbon who offers ample space for the treatment of the Holy Spirit with due respect to the other two Persons.

Isaac the Syrian: Preacher of God's Love and Mercy

Dr. Rincy Maria CMC

Introduction

The teaching of the Church Fathers has contributed so much to the development of the doctrine of the Church. The period from the fourth to the seventh century is considered to be the golden age of Syriac literature. During this time many spiritual works were produced. The most famous of the monastic writers of the Church of the East, at that time is St. Isaac of Nineveh also called St. Isaac the Syrian¹, the author of a large number of short works on various aspects of the spiritual life. He represents the spiritual theory put into practice as well as the verification of theory through years of personal asceticism and contemplation². He lived in the seventh century and was a hermit. He was exceedingly well versed in the divine writings, even to the point that he lost his eyesight by reason of his reading and asceticism. He entered deeply into the divine mysteries and composed books on the divine discipline of solitude.

God, as love, is of course central to all Christian faith. The whole theological system of Isaac is based on this idea of love of God. Along with the characteristic of love, Christian theology attributes other

characteristics such as 'holy' and 'just' to God. For Isaac these are only applicable if they are subordinated to the central characteristic of God as love. The love of God is central not only to speculation about divine nature, but to the practical ethics of the believer³. Isaac says: "The flower of spiritual knowledge is divine love, which has its origin in radiant insights which are found by the spirit during prayer"⁴.

1. Topics on God in the Treatises of Isaac

Isaac understands God from his experience and has deepened this through his ascetical practices and spiritual exercises. For him God is the only Being and everything else can find meaning in this reality. All the writings and advices of Isaac come out only from this experience. For him, the prime purpose of the Incarnation and Crucifixion was the expression of God's love for humanity. The divine outpouring of love never imposes to humanity, because it respects the free will of the person. Basically, the Christian life is a response to this divine love. For Isaac, "the whole purpose of prayer is for us to acquire the love of God, for in prayer there can be discovered all sorts of reasons for loving God"⁵. Isaac's emphasis on the love of God and its simplicity and directness, is demonstrated by Bishop Kallistos in the 'Foreword' of *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian* by Hilarion Alfeyev:

¹ This is the traditional name used in the Orthodox world. It is sometimes a misleading name, since Isaac to our knowledge never went to Syria. But his texts are written in Syriac. Cf., HAGMAN, *The Asceticism of Isaac of Nineveh*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010, 25.

² BEGGIANI, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality*, London 1991, 81.

³ HAGMAN, *The Asceticism of Isaac of Nineveh*, 39.

⁴ ISAAC, *Mystic Treatises*, LXVIII (475), 318.

⁵ ISAAC, *Mystic Treatises*, LXIII (439), 294.

Running through the discourses of Isaac there is a theme always highlighted: the primacy of love. It is the love that provides an explanation for the creation of the universe and for the incarnation of Christ. It is love that enables us, as nothing else can do, compassionately to embrace and transfigure the suffering of the world. And it is the logic of divine love that provides a key to the dark mystery of hell. The important thing is not the central place of love in his teaching but the directness, the simplicity, the intensity with which he speaks about God's loving economy. Never before outside the Holy Scripture, had I found someone who could say so much in so few words⁶.

The idea of God as love is central and dominant in Isaac's thought. It is the basis of his theological ideas, ascetical practices, recommendations and mystical insights. He cannot restrict his understanding of God to that of a judge. According to Isaac, "justice is the equality of the even scale which gives to every man as he deserves without deviation to any side and without any consideration of a reward for itself. Compassion is an affection which is stirred by bounty and which goes out to everyone for his/her support. As a grain of sand does not balance a load of gold, so the effect of God's justice does not counterbalance His compassion"⁷. God does not behave according to our

behaviour. He always expresses His love and compassion to everybody; He throws away all the sins into the depth of the ocean. So Isaac's view of God can be said to come from the New rather than the Old Testament:

After the transgression of the commandment, God revealed himself as Judge, as in the revelations, according to the rank of Lord, between Noah, Abraham and the others after him. It is written: 'My servant Abraham' and 'My servant Moses'. In the coming of Christ, he has revealed his rank as Father - a true father that does not have the will of a lordship or judgement⁸.

1.1 God (ܐܠܗܐ *alāhā*): A Caring Father

Another important characteristic of God that Isaac stresses is His providential care (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ *bīlūtā d-alāhā*)⁹. In Christian literature, providence is identified with the activity of God which is called

⁸ ISAAC, *Discorsi Spirituali*, I (17), 54.

⁹ Providence of God (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ), expressions are very frequent in Isaac: *Third Part*, XII, 5, 19, 25; *First Part*, V, 65; VII, 103; XXXV, 262; XL, 304; LX, 422; LXXI, 489-490; LXXII, m 498; *Second Part*, VIII, 26; XVII, 6, 8; *Cent. I*, 51; II, 73, 102. Frequently is also comes the analogue of 'divine providence' (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ): *Third Part*, XII, 20; *First Part*, XXXV, 248; XXXIX, 301; XLVIII, 339; LI, 360, 370; LVII, 399; *Second Part*, VIII, 25; XVII, 4; XIX, 8; *Cent. II*, 15, 47. But the affirmation of the 'existence of a divine providence, that is, that God takes care of created beings and history, sometimes in dispute with those who deny it, this is well beyond these occurrences. Cf. ISACCO, *Terza Collezione*, CSCO 638, *Scriptores Syri* 247, CHIALÀ (Italian transl. & ed.), III (4), n. 7, Lovanii 2011, 18.

⁶ KALLISTOS, "Foreword", in ALFEYEV, *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian*, Kalamazoo 2000, 11.

⁷ ISAAC, *Mystic Treatises*, L (345), 231.

oikonomia (οικονομία, literally 'household management'). God loves, protects, feeds, clothes, instructs, influences, controls and governs His entire household, in which all is good and the divine law is the only law operating in or affecting it. Isaac says:

So you should see that, while God's caring is guiding us all the time to what He wishes for us, as things outwardly appear it is from us that He takes the occasion for providing things, His aim being to carry out by every means what he has intended of our advantage. All this is because He knew before hand our inclination towards all sorts of wickedness¹⁰, and so He cunningly made the harmful consequences which would result from this into a means of entry to the future good and the setting right of our corrupted state. These are things which are known only to Him. But after we have been exercised and assisted little by little as a result of these consequences after they have occurred, we realize and perceive that it could not turn out otherwise than in accordance with what has been foreseen by Him¹¹.

God's care is with those who suffer for His sake for any reason. By this providential care, they themselves might receive encouragement and strength. Isaac says

that it is a sign that one is approaching purity when one starts to perceive divine care¹².

1.2 Divine Pedagogy

For the inspired authors in the OT, the concept of God's providence embrace the creation, government and care of all things in the created order and their subjection to His will (Gen 8,21-22; Jer 5,22-24; Psalm 103; 148,6). Throughout the OT, God's acts on behalf of his people are constantly extolled as proofs of His providence¹³. The providence of God (ܡܕܒܪܐܢܘܬܐ ܕ-ܐܠܗܐ) *mdabbrānūtā d-alāhā*) always keeps a person from the darkness of mind and gives illumination to his thought. The only thing we need is to trust in His care. Isaac says:

Until someone loses the faith which is in his heart, that means the certain knowledge of this divine care (ܡܕܒܪܐܢܘܬܐ ܕ-ܐܠܗܐ) *btīlūtā alāhāytā*)¹⁴ which will prevent him from falling into darkness of mind, from which comes anxiety and anguish – for otherwise his soul is filled all the time with light and joy, and it exults continually – that person dwells as though in heaven in the

¹⁰ Inclination... wickedness (*Imestalyānūtān d-pānyā l-kol bīšān* ܡܕܒܪܐܢܘܬܐ ܕ-ܐܠܗܐ): the phraseology is derived from Theodore, e.g. *WS* V 173 (*mestalyānūtān da-lwatbīšā*), 222 (*mestalyānūtānda- lwatbīšātā*), cf. BROCK, *Second Part*, XXXIX (5), n.1, 165.

¹¹ ISAAC, *Second Part*, XXXIX (5), 164-165.

¹² Cf. ISAAC, *Mystic Treatises*, LXXI (489), 328.

¹³ MASTERMANN, "Providence of God in the Bible", in MARTHALER, ed., *NCE* 11, Washington 2003, 780.

¹⁴ divine care (ܡܕܒܪܐܢܘܬܐ ܕ-ܐܠܗܐ) *btīlūtā alāhāytā*): cf. XVIII.4, XIX.8, Part I 248, 301, 339,360, 370, 399,418, 489; Evagrius *Ev.Syr.* 140. At VIII.26, XVII.6, 8 Isaac uses *btīlūtād-alāhā* (as Part I 65, 103, 262, 304,337, 422, 498), which is also Evagrian (*Keph.* VI 43, 59, 75), and is preferred by John the Solitary (*Thaum.* IV.122, VI.6) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (ed. JANSMA, *Le Muséon* 1962, 68, 69), Cf. BROCK, *Second Part*, VIII (25) n.2, 32.

illumination of his thoughts which the faith of his heart instills in him; and from this point on he is also held worthy of the revelation of insights. But once someone has doubted God's care for him, he immediately falls into myriad anxieties¹⁵.

For Isaac, discovering God's providence (ܡܕܒܒܪܢܘܬܐ ܡܕܒܒܪܢܘܬܐ *mdabbrānūtā alahaytā*) in each person's life is an important way to move closer to God. In another way, the ascetic tries to interpret life in a way that sees all things that happen as meaningful and connected to each other by the will of God. Two central principles are the basis of this thinking of Isaac. First, Isaac tends to attribute everything, good or bad, to God. Secondly, Isaac sees the world as a sort of school, where humans are educated for the coming world. For Isaac, God's pedagogy is a way to deal with the problem of suffering in this world. The divine pedagogy towards the attainment of salvation is the outcome of the divine economy. It is constituted of three factors that is the goodness of God, the divine justice, and the free will of humanity. Free will has been conferred on humanity by the goodness of God. The providential care of God that encompasses all, the sinner also can receive this care; through prayers they can preserve themselves under the mighty protection of God's hand¹⁶.

1.3 Divine Love (ܠܘܒܐ ܠܠܗܐ *ḥubbā alāhāyā*): Ultimate Purpose (ܐܬܪܐ ܬܐܡܝܬܐ *tar'ītā mtōmāyā*) of Creation (ܒܪܐ *brūtā*)

Isaac may be considered an apt spokesman for the entire early Christian ascetics. Throughout his life he experienced the intimacy of God's love and he was always proclaiming the beauty of this love. Divine love is beyond human understanding. At the same time it is reflected in God's action with respect to the created world and humankind. According to Isaac, "Among all His actions there is none which is not entirely a matter of mercy. Love and compassion: this constitutes the beginning and the end of His dealings with us"¹⁷. Divine love was the main reason for the creation of the universe and is the main driving force behind the whole of creation. In the creation of the world divine love revealed itself in all its fullness¹⁸. Isaac sees that God created this world out of His goodness. Isaac expresses his understanding of God's goodness, compassion and patience thus:

What that invisible Being is like, who is without any beginning in His nature, unique in Himself, who is by nature beyond the knowledge, intellect and feel of created beings, who is beyond time and space, being the Creator of these, who at the beginning of time was learnt about through hints and was made known as it were through (His) mark by means of establishing of the

¹⁵ ISAAC, *Second Part*, VIII (25-26), 32-33.

¹⁶ ISAAC, *Second Part*, V (28), 18.

¹⁷ ISAAC, *Second Part*, XXXIX (22), 172.

¹⁸ ALFEYEV, *The Spiritual World of Isaac The Syrian*, 36.

fullness of creation...Let us consider then, how rich in its wealth is the ocean of His creative act, and how many created things belong to God, and how in His compassion He carries everything, acting providentially as He guides creation; and how with a love that cannot be measured. He arrived at the establishment of the world and the beginning of creation; and how compassionate God is, and how patient; and how He loves creation, and how He carries it gently enduring its importunity, the various sins and wickedness, the terrible blasphemies of demons and evil men¹⁹.

Isaac's eschatological vision is embedded in love. God created everything with abundant love. Isaac describes beautifully how the Creator made this world in love, sustains in love and will bring it to completion in love:

In love did He bring the world into existence; in love does He guide it during this its temporal existence; in love is He going to bring it to that wondrous transformed state, and in love will the world be swallowed up in the great mystery of Him who has performed all these things; in love will the whole course of the governance of creation be finally comprised²⁰.

True love of God for creation we can understand through the creation itself. After he is having finished to shape it according to all its various parts, has completely joined in a single entity: he has joined together its sensitive reality and the intelligible reality in a unique constraint, he united them to his divinity; made it rise above all the heavens, he made it sit on an eternal throne and God has made everything²¹.

1.4 Divine Love (ܠܘܒܐ ܠܠܗ ܠܠܗܐ *ḥubbā alāhāyā*): Continuous Realization of the Creative Potential of God

All in creation is image or symbol of the Creator, in the sense that in it and through it the Invisible is seen, the Unknowable is known and the Omnipresent and Eternal experienced within the limits of space and time²². Divine love is a continuing realization of the creative potential of God, an endless revelation of the Divinity in His creative act. Divine love lies at the foundation of the universe, it governs the world²³:

A person that has found love eats Christ at all times and becomes immortal from then onwards. For whoever eats this bread shall not taste death in eternity. Blessed is the person that has eaten from the bread of love which is Jesus. Whoever is fed with love fed with Christ, who is the all-governing

²¹ ISAACO, *Discorsi Ascetici: Terza collezione*, V (2), 79.

²² BIESEN, *Simple and Bold: Ephrem's Art of Symbolic Thought*, Piscataway 2006, 22.

²³ ALFEYEV, *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian*, 37.

¹⁹ ISAAC, *Second Part*, X (18-19), 43.

²⁰ ISAAC, *Second Part*, XXXVIII (2), 160.

God. John is witness to this when he says: God is Love (1 Jn. 4:16). Thus he smells life from God, which lives with love in this creation. ...Love, is sufficient to feed mankind instead of food and drink.²⁴

All things exist by participation in the only existing one, but man has a particular way, in which he participates in God, different from that of all other beings. He communicates with him freely, because he carries the image of the Creator. God became man in order to fulfil the destiny of man, the original state²⁵. Isaac sees faith as an organ of relationship between man and nature and between God and man. God by revealing himself to the world, made us partakers of the divine knowledge and in the message of salvation. Isaac says, "insofar as a person draws near to the knowledge of truth, he becomes less (under the influence) of the activity of the senses and he continually leans towards the silence of discernment"²⁶. The purpose of creation is the love of God and this purpose never changes. The nature of God is always the same:

The love of the Creator is not diminished towards those rational beings who have become demons as a result of their demonic action, (and is any less) than the fullness of love which He has towards those who remain in the angelic state; or that is less for sinners

than for those who are justly named the righteous. This is because the divine Nature is not affected by what happens²⁷ and by opposition, nor does there spring up within it any casual stirring which takes its origin from creation, and which is not to be found with Him from eternity; nor does He have a kind of love which originates as a result of events which take place in time²⁸.

The love of God is perfect and complete. As a God of infinite compassion, the creator is not grudging, in his mercy and forgiveness but immeasurably patient. Never has He compelled anybody, but in fact He will wait until each and every one of his rational creatures voluntarily responds to his love. Divine love is stronger than all the forces of darkness.

2. Mercy (رحمة *rahmē*) and Compassion (حنان *ḥnānā*)²⁹: Truth of God

The theme of mercy and humility also occupy a central place in Isaac's writings. The writings of Isaac contain constant reminders of the love one should have for mercy, which he sees as the foundation of

²⁴ ISAAC, *Mystic Treatises*, XLIII (316-317), 211-212.

²⁵ MEYENDORFF, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, New York 1975, 129.

²⁶ ISAAC, *Second Part*, XIII (1), 65.

²⁷ Is not affected by what happens (*lām qabblānā d-gedšē*): in contrast to human nature which Isaac describes as *mqabblānā d-gedšē* in PR (70) 503. Cf., ISAAC, *Second Part* XL (2), n.1, 174.

²⁸ ISAAC, *Second Part*, XL (2), 174.

²⁹ In Syriac: *mrahmānūtā*, the noun formed on the root *rh*m, which indicates precisely compassion or mercy. Normally translate this term with 'compassion', and will make the synonym *rahmā/rahmē*, built on the same root, with 'mercy', Cf. ISACCO, *Annuncia la Bontà di Dio*, CHIALÀ, Italian transl., n. 7, Magnano 2006, 15.

adoration and humility³⁰. Isaac insisted on preaching on the love of mercy. According to him, it is the foundation of all worship. And humility, which is the protecting wall for the virtues³¹. This emphasis on mercy and humility recalls the *apophtegmata* of the Desert Fathers who teach that mercy and humility are the only two aspects of the ascetical life that the demons are incapable of imitating. For Isaac this led to an emphasis on the endless mercy of God for all that exists and a challenge to us to follow in this way. It is an emphasis that is specific to Isaac but which also led to misunderstanding and rejection among those who found that his vision of God was too merciful³². Isaac always compares the compassion of God with the ocean, "How wonderful is the compassion of God! – who can measure the ocean of his grace?"³³ We know the expanse of the ocean; we cannot measure the water in it. Like the mercy of God, it has no limit.

The word of God challenges every Christian, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos 6,6). God's mercy is manifested foremost in forgiving the infidelity of his people. "The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving the iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex 34,6-7). The

mercy of God finds its fulfilment in the New Testament. The mercy of God is not simply an emotion; it is always manifested historically in personal actions. He has mercy on His people and multiplies them (Deut 13,17), restores their fortunes (Jer 33,26; Ezek 39,25), and delivers them from their enemies (Jer 42,12). The OT record of God's mercy forms the context for its manifestation in the NT. The birth of the Messiah reveals God's covenantal mercy and faithfulness to save His unworthy people (Lk 1,50, 54, 72; Ps 103,17)³⁴.

2.2 Divine Love (ܠܘܒܐ ܠܗܘܒܐ *ḥubbā alāhāyā*): Source of Mercy (ܠܗܡܐ *raḥmē*)

Mercy is the loving care for all creatures, especially human beings, which invites us in turn to empathize with and alleviate the misery of others. Human beings call for mercy, and God is more than willing to grant it. The NT celebrates God's mercy, revealed and expressed above all through Jesus' words and His loving deeds³⁵. It unites and intensifies the love of human beings and the hatred of vice. In this sense, mercy is found in its most perfect expressions in God, since mercy is the efficacious hatred of another's evil. Prayer, humility and mercy have an exceptional importance in Isaac's writings:

How great is this means with which our compassionate maker has, in the wisdom of His divinity, provided us for the sake of our everlasting life, for it is His wish

³⁰ HANSBURY, "Introduction", in *St. Isaac of Nineveh on Ascetical Life*, Crestwood, New York 1989, 11-12.

³¹ Cf. ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, XLII (212), 345.

³² CHIALÀ, *Witness to God's mercy: Conference of Br. Sabino Chialà on Isaac of Nineveh*, <http://avowofconversation.wordpress.com> (access: 14 June 2008), 2.

³³ ISAAC, *Second Part*, XIX (11), 105.

³⁴ GARLAND, "Mercy", in G.W. BROMILEY, ed., *ISBE III*, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1986, 323.

³⁵ O'COLLINS – FARRUGIA, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, New York 2013³, 155.

that each day we should be renewed and start up again with a virtuous change of will, and with a renewal of mind³⁶.

God wills that we practise mercy as the most excellent way of accomplishing the second commandment. God expressly says so: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos 6,6); (Mt 12,7). Mercy, to unite us with Him who is "merciful and gracious" (Ps 102,8); (Ex 34,6) should tend to prompt us to imitate of Him. Mercy is intimately involved in our union with God Himself. Christ is the source of merciful love; He enlightens and inspires all forms of mercy³⁷. The OT tells of God's love manifested in His mercy. Isaac invites us to become merciful because this is the first step of the spiritual journey:

Pursue mercy; for when something that is like unto God is found in you, then that holy beauty is depicted by Him. For the whole sum of the deeds of the mercy immediately bring the soil into communion with the unity of the glory of the Godhead's splendour... There is no other path toward spiritual love, which forms the invisible image, except by first beginning to show compassion in proportion to the Father's perfection³⁸.

God's basic characteristic is that he is selfless love. This divine love has no limit and it is given to everybody and everything. God expresses His love through his

mercy and compassion. He does not make distinctions among people. He acts with a merciful heart. Isaac says that those who experience this divine love also behave like God with a compassionate and merciful heart:

It is the heart's burning for the sake of the entire creation, for men, for birds, for animals, for demons, and for every created thing; and at the recollection and sight of them; the eyes of a merciful man pour forth abundant tears. From the strong and vehement mercy that grips his heart and from his great compassion, his heart is humbled and he cannot bear to hear or to see any injury or slight sorrow in creation. For this reason he offers up prayers with tears continually even for rational beasts, for the enemies of the truth, and for those who harm, that they be protected and receive mercy. And in like manner he even prays for the family of reptiles, because of the great compassion that burns without measure in his heart in the likeness of God³⁹.

Isaac always emphasises the merciful acts from human beings because God always acts with this attitude towards us. Deeds without mercy are before God like a man killing a son in the presence of a father. He makes a comparison to the mercy of God:

Compared with God's mercy and God's providence the trespasses

³⁶ ISAAC, *Second Part*, XL (9), 176.

³⁷ PERRIN, "Mercy", in *NCE* 9, 504.

³⁸ ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, I (7, 8), 118.

³⁹ ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, LXXI (344), 491.

of all flesh are as a handful of sand thrown into the sea and as a strongly flowing spring is not obstructed by a handful of dust, so the mercy of the Creator is not stemmed by the vices of the creatures"⁴⁰. God's mercy accompanies those who willingly deprive themselves of worldly blessings and His loving kindness supports them to the degree that they deprive themselves of them. The source of all love is God; Isaac says, "There is a love like a small lamp, fed by oil, which goes out when the oil is ended; or like a rain-fed stream which goes dry, when rain no longer feeds it. But there is a love, like a spring gushing from the earth, never to be exhausted. The first is human love; the second is divine, and has God as its source"⁴¹.

Practices of mercy bring the soul into union with God. Through this we reach near to the perfection of God. The mercy of the Lord keeps sinners from their old path and leads them to the love of God. "Protect the sinner without doing him wrong. But strengthen his courage for life; then the mercy of the Lord will bear thee"⁴². Concerning God's judgement it comes out of His mercy and out of His love:

Concerning God's judgement and the ages; and concerning the diversity of the courses of men's lives and the diversity of the

recompenses appointed to each even now; and concerning God's justice which manifests itself from time to time, and then is held back because of His long-suffering; and through *theoria* (θεωρία *ōryā*) concerning righteous men and sinners, and the adverse nature of dissimilar encounters with persons who are providentially opposed to you. When the understanding beholds these things, the entire soul is moved"⁴³.

Isaac emphasises on the love and mercy rooted in fear of the living God. Fear is not only the fear of chastisement but also fear of losing his love. So he insisted the fear only to a way to love God:

Fear God out of love for Him, and not for the awesome name that He is given. Love Him as you should love Him, and not for what He will give you in the future, but for what we have received in the present and for this world alone, which He has created for us... In the degree that a man despises this world and shows zeal in fearing God, God's providence comes near him and he is secretly aware of the help of Providence and pure thoughts are given him to understand it"⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ ISAAC, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, 275.

⁴¹ ISAAC, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, 197.

⁴² ISAAC, *Mystical Treatises*, II (14), 9.

⁴³ ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, XXVII (136), 260.

⁴⁴ ISAAC, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, 279, ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, LI 251, 388.

**2.3. Transformation (ܫܠܬܢܐ *Šuhlāpē*)
from Justice (ܟܢܘܬܐ *Kenūtā*) to
Mercy (ܪܚܡܐ *rahmē*)**

The mercy of God is not stunned by the vices of his creatures. His mercy towards humanity is not dependent on the goodness of people. He always forgets their sins and showers his endless mercy upon each person. Isaac says:

As a handful of sand thrown into the great sea, so are the sins of all flesh in comparison with the mind of God. As a man who sows in the sea and expects to reap a harvest, so is he who remembers wrongs and prays. Like the flame of fire cannot be checked from rising upward, so the prayers of the merciful are not hindered from ascending to heaven. The man who has acquired humility in his heart is dead to this world; he who is dead to the world has died to the passions; and for him who has died in his heart to his kinsmen, the devil is dead⁴⁵.

To show the depth of God's mercy, Isaac uses examples from the natural world. The ordinary people can easily understand God's mercy and justice by these examples. He says, "As grass and fire cannot co-exist in one place, so justice and mercy cannot abide in one soul. As a grain of sand cannot counterbalance a great quantity of gold, so in comparison, God's use of justice cannot counterbalance His mercy"⁴⁶. Mercy is the only way that our

Lord has set by which you can get closer to God.

**2.4 Merciful Heart- Image (ܫܠܡܐ *šalmā*)
and Likeness (ܕܡܘܬܐ *dinūtā*) of
God's Mercy**

God created humans in the image of Him and implanted in them the longing for what is good. He did this so no good thing should come from outside us, but that it should be within our power to will what we want by bringing forth the good stocked up in the storehouse of our heart. Isaac invites us to become a merciful man and the owner of a merciful heart which is the easy way to obtain God's mercy:

'Blessed is the merciful man, for he shall obtain mercy'⁴⁷, not only in the hereafter, but also here in a mystical way. Indeed what mercy is greater than this, that when a man is moved with compassion for a fellow man and becomes a partaker in his suffering? Our Lord delivers his soul from the gloom of darkness –which is the noetic gehenna – and brings her into the light of life, thus filling her with the delight... And when it is in your power to deliver the iniquitous man from evil, do not neglect to do so. I do not mean that if the affair is far removed from you, you should go and throw yourself into the work of this sort, for deeds of this kind do not belong to your way of life. If, however, the affair is placed directly into your hands and is within your power... then take

⁴⁵ ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, LI (244), 379.

⁴⁶ ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, LI (244), 379.

⁴⁷ Cf. Mt 5,7.

heed to yourself, lest you become a partaker of the blood of the iniquitous man by not taking pains to deliver him... Instead of a fault finder, be a soother. Instead of betrayer, be a martyr. Instead of a chider, be a defender. Beseech God on behalf of sinners that they receive mercy⁴⁸.

Love, compassion and righteous activity (*Praxis*) lead to the soul's divine vision and to the heart's "hypostatic" union with God's grace⁴⁹. True love of God always gives birth to holy actions, to a response of service and care for one's brother. Isaac identifies strongly with this principle, "He who neglects the sick shall not see light. And who turns away his face from one in distress, may his day be dark. And who despises the cry of the vexed, may the sons of his house grope in darkness"⁵⁰. Isaac states that the criterion indicating that pure prayer has been achieved is "heart full of mercy unto the whole created nature ... man, fowl and beasts, demons and whatever exists, so that by the recollection and the sight of them the eyes shed tears on account of the force of mercy which moves

the heart by great compassion"⁵¹. We must bear the shortcomings of our brethren and love each one of them more than their deeds, through which we make the path to the eternal kingdom.

Conclusion

In every epoch, the Christian needs to be reminded of the universal love of God for His creation because in every epoch there is a strong tendency within Christianity to replace the religion of love and freedom that was brought by Jesus with the religion of slavery and fear. Isaac reminds us that it is not out of fear or punishment or out of hope for future reward that we are to keep God's commandments, but out of love for God. The reasons for the mercy that Isaac asks of every human being are theological: it is an attitude of God, as the man would reveal the heart of God, be an announcer of the goodness of God. The merciful heart in a human person is therefore the image and likeness of God's mercy, which embraces the whole creation. He cares for every creature without any distinction. This merciful heart we must show to every creature.

⁴⁸ ISAAC, *Mystic Treatises*, LXV (456-457), 305-306; *The Ascetical Homilies*, LXIV (313), 456.

⁴⁹ Cf. ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, I (8), 118.

⁵⁰ ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, LXVI (379), 532; *Mystic Treatises*, LXXXI (572), 383.

⁵¹ ISAAC, *The Ascetical Homilies*, LXXI (344), 491; *Mystic Treatises*, LXXIV (507), 341; MASCIA, "The Gift of Tears in Isaac of Nineveh: A Transition to Pure Prayer and the Virtue of Mercy", *Diakonia* 14 (1979) 263.

The *Wardā* on Mary, the Virgin Mother

Fr. Jacob Kizhakkevedu

Introduction

A collection of hymns called *The Book of Wardā* is one of the greatest treasures in the East Syriac tradition. The hymns in this collection enriched the *Hūdṛā* and *Gazzā*¹ a lot by supplying *oniyatas* for various feasts in the liturgical year and hence it is a great liturgical source. Thanks to the authors of the collection that the hymns transmitted the theology of the East Syriac tradition² to the future generations which had developed over the centuries³ through great fathers like Aphrahat, Mar Aprem, Mar Narsai, etc.

The purpose of the *Wardā* hymns was to edify the faithful by arranging in a poetic way the theology of the East Syriac tradition.⁴ The hymns should be read against the historical, religious, liturgical and cultural background of the Syriac Church in the 13th and the later centuries. It was a period of suffering because of the invasion of the Mongols, a period of literary growth, the Syriac Renaissance⁵, a period of Islamic influence, a period which had a slight Byzantine influence⁶ and a period of the mutual influence of the East and the West Syriac Traditions.⁷ In this context, the author (authors) tries to educate the faithful and to interpret to them the basic faith and traditions basing on its early fathers and writers, applying them in the then contexts and situations.⁸ Biblical events and biblical examples are used abundantly.⁹ And the influence of Syriac writers like Mar Ephrem, Narsai,¹⁰ Shelmon of Barsa,¹¹ Balai,¹² and certain apocryphals¹³ also can be found in them.

Since the East Syriac poetry has an important role in sermon and in interpretation of the Scripture, the *Wardā* hymns have a didactical approach playing a "significant educational role in the area of personal and collective religiosity."¹⁴ The hymns had an aim also to strengthen the faithful in the situations of famine and invasion,¹⁵ depending on the tradition in a new theological way.¹⁶ Since the Syriac tradition has a nature of expressing its theology through poetry,¹⁷ the *Wardā* hymns reflect the theological perspectives of the East Syriac Church. The author tries to "understand and to interpret the situations confronting his community of faith by placing it in a narration of God's dealing with his people in history."¹⁸ And in the East Syriac tradition, spirituality, theology and ecclesiology are greatly intermingled with liturgy.¹⁹

And the collection is eloquent to speak about Mary, the mother of the Lord (ܡܪܝܡ ܡܕܢܚ). First we see a brief outline of the *Wardā* collection and then the picture of Mary presented in the collection.

1. The *Wardā* Collection

'ܬܝܒܐ ܠܒܕܐ' (*The Book of the Wardā*)²⁰ is a collection of hymns in the East Syriac tradition, usually attributed in the manuscripts to a certain *Gīwargīs*, surnamed *Wardā*²¹ who lived in the 13th century and to some other authors who lived between the 12th and the 16th centuries.²² Even though in the second half of the 19th century that certain hymns in the *Wardā* collection started being published and studies on them began to appear, it is recently the studies on it got a momentum.²³

1.1. *Gīwargīs Wardā*

It is traditionally believed that *Gīwargīs Wardā* comes from Arbela.²⁴ In the manuscripts his name is mentioned always as *Gīwargīs Wardā* without referring to his place.²⁵ However, we get a little idea about *Gīwargīs* from a hymn in the collection which has a biographical nature. The hymn is critically edited and translated by A. Pritula.²⁶ The hymn clearly depicts that the author had an elite position in the society and in the Church which was higher than the priests and deacons. Pritula is of the opinion that *Gīwargīs Wardā* was "a bishop".²⁷

With regard to the time of *Gīwargīs Wardā*, W. Wright opines that he might have lived in the thirteenth century considering the events narrated in the hymns.²⁸ There was a Mongol invasion in Northern Mesopotamia in the third and fourth decades of the thirteenth century,²⁹ a time characterised by famine, plague, drought and invasion³⁰ and his poems depict the atrocities and the pains the people went through during the invasion, especially in his 'hymn on hunger, plague and lack of rain'.³¹

However the authors of many hymns in this collection are other than *Gīwargīs Wardā*,³² who lived between the 12th and 16th centuries.³³ Some of them are the Patriarch *Yāhballāhā* II (13th century), the Metropolitan *Šlemōn of Akhlāt* (first half of the 13 century), *Khāmīs bar Qardāhē* (second half of the 13 century), *Sliba Mansūrī* (first half of the 16th century), etc.³⁴ The attribution of the hymns to *Gīwargīs Wardā* by other authors may be

because of the wide popularity and acceptance his hymns gained³⁵ and so the other authors might have imitated the literary style of *Gīwargīs Wardā*.³⁶

1.2. Characteristics

The beauty of the poetry is at its best in the '*Book of Wardā*'. As we have seen above, the collection got the metaphor of the 'rose' (ܪܳܘܳܣܳܐ) because of the beauty of the verses. "As a poet, *Gīwargīs Wardā* is a master who dominates the form of his art. Hilgenfeld commented on the quality of George's poetry, saying, 'His verse breathes power and life. He arouses our fantasy [...]'".³⁷

The collection has more than 150 hymns³⁸ and there are about 40 to 70 strophes for each hymn. Most of the hymns are ascribed to *Gīwargīs Wardā*.³⁹ Each strophe contains four lines of seven syllables. "The strophes have usually the same syllable or word at the end of each line"⁴⁰ and this seven syllable system made easier for the faithful to sing.⁴¹ One of the main characteristics of the hymns is that they have a prologue and an epilogue. "The prologue is usually a prayer that Mary, or a saint or Christ, might look with favour on the community and that the efforts of the hymnist might be blessed."⁴² The epilogues usually pray to God asking His mercy for both the hymnist and for those who suffer. In the prologues and epilogues, "the seven syllable lines interchange with eight syllable lines producing a 7 8 7 8 pattern in the prologue and an 8 7 8 7 arrangement in the epilogue. The eight syllable lines are composed of equal four syllable half verses."⁴³

1.3 Liturgical Purpose

Even though the studies in the 20th century on the *Wardā* collection concentrated more on its historical ingredients,⁴⁴ the profound and committed work of A. Pritula proved that it has more a liturgical character. So, "they should be interpreted as liturgical texts."⁴⁵ However, the historical⁴⁶ and cultural aspects in them must not be ignored.⁴⁷

The Divine Office of the East Syriac Church is very much indebted to this collection of hymns. F. S. Müller is of the opinion that the hymns in influenced by *Breviarium Iuxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium Id Est Chaldaeorum* are *Gīwargīs Wardā*.⁴⁸

The hymns in the collection are arranged according to the liturgical year of the East Syriac tradition.⁴⁹ The collection contains hymns for the Sundays (not all) of the 9 seasons⁵⁰ of the East Syriac liturgical year, exhortations to repentance, hymns for the various feasts such as the Ascension, the Pentecost, Rogation of the Ninivates, etc., commemorations of the saints⁵¹ such as that of Mary, of St. George, etc., and calamitous historical events.⁵² According to Badger, certain hymns are "chanted immediately after the reading of the Gospel in the Liturgy, and others are recited whilst the communicants are partaking the holy elements."⁵³

The liturgical use might have begun in the 13th or the first half of the 14th century,⁵⁴ even at the time of *Gīwargīs*,⁵⁵ and the collection is a great resource of the Chaldean *Breviarium*.⁵⁶ The *Wardā* functioned as a 'hymnological supplement' to East Syriac *Hūdā* and also to *Gazzā*.⁵⁷

The liturgical use of the hymns affirms the fact that the "theological content of the poems [... was] in agreement with the teaching of the Church."⁵⁸ One of the best proofs for the liturgical use of the *Wardā* hymns is that the collection was well known in Malabar and because of it in the Diamper Synod, some of the hymns of *Wardā* were condemned.⁵⁹

So the hymns of *Wardā* being as liturgical texts, where theology and spirituality are intermingled, the concept of Mary in the East Syriac tradition can also be extracted from them.

2. The Picture of Mary in the *Wardā*⁶⁰

"East Syriac Mariology may be understood as a contemplation of the portrait of Mary, who is encountered in the East Syriac liturgical celebrations"⁶¹ and this image of Mary is depicted through "many biblical and natural analogies through prophetic words and deeds."⁶² The Marian hymns in the *Wardā* are not exceptions.

Since the *Wardā* supplied a lot of resources to the East Syriac liturgy, extracting the image of Mary from the collection will be a profitable task. The *Wardā* has got the title 'Marian doctor' not because there are a lot of Marian hymns in it, but because of the great dignity given to Mary in the hymns and also because of the immense love of the author towards Mary which he manifests and suggests to the faithful.⁶³

The hymns on Mary have great dependence on Mar Ephrem and Mar Narsai who had the background of the

earlier Syriac literature such as *Odes of Solomon*, *The Acts of Thomas*, etc.; on the Syriac *Sūnāyā* apocryphals which became popular in the 5th to 7th centuries,⁶⁴ and on later writings (almost the same period of *Gīwargīs Wardā*) such as the *Book of the Bee* (13th century).⁶⁵ “Il suo [of *Gīwargīs*] pensiero riflette nondimeno quello della sua Chiesa, quale era stato costituito nel grande periodo patristico.”⁶⁶ Thus it is possible to mine the development of the theology of Mary analysing the *Wardā* Mariological hymns compared to writings on Mary in the East Syriac tradition in the first twelve centuries. However, Syriac Mariology is better to be experienced rather than to be analysed.⁶⁷

However, since this work is a first venture in this area, we will see what all things are said about Mary in the hymns of *Wardā*. With this intention, we will go through the selected six hymns on Mary in the *Wardā* collection.⁶⁸

2.1. God Prepares Mary towards the Glorious Motherhood

It was the divine plan of God that made Mary the mother of Christ. So He prepared Mary from the very beginning of her birth. The *Onita d'-bāsāliqē* on the feast of the Immaculate conception of Mary, says that God created Mary, holy and pure and He filled her with graces.⁶⁹ Even there were prophesies in the Old Testament to be fulfilled in her. See the beautiful words which describe how God prepared Mary to the greatest motherhood:

Mary did not walk on the earth,
She did not wander on the public
squares
She knew nothing of the

human affairs

Because she was never away from
the mother (HyM 4, 29).

He protects her from all the evils: “*Una nube di nobiltà e di dignità copriva sempre la sua modesta persona; fuori fu protetta dagli angeli, dentro era guidata dalla sua prudenza e dalla sua modestia*” (HyM 6, 16). Thus her body, soul and spirit were kept in purity.

2.1.1 Fulfilment of Prophecy

It is in Mary, “God fulfilled his promise which was given to Abraham, the father of believers.”⁷⁰ The maternity of Mary is the plan of God, “*fu rivelata in molte profezie dell'Antico Testamento*”⁷¹ because the son of Adam, Jesus, who came through Mary sublimated all our sins (HyM 2, 7).⁷² The foretelling of Isaiah and Ezekiel are many times mentioned in the hymns. HyM 1, says that the “prophets depicted her in their images [...] and the prophets called her virgin” (HyM 1, 40). The prophesy of Isaiah (Is 7, 14) is highlighted many times (HyM 1, 41; HyM 2, 32; HyM 4, 49; HyM 5, 64; HyM 6, 67). As all the Syriac fathers say, the *Wardā* also says that she is the descendent of David (HyM 2, 33; HyM 4, 7), “[t]his one is Jesse’s offspring and David’s root, which this prophet described in the seventh section” (HyM 2, 33).⁷³ “She is the gate of the Lord (ܠܒܝܐ ܡܝܬܐ)” as said by Ezekiel⁷⁴ (HyM 2, 34, HyM 6, 29). The author of the *Wardā* is of the opinion that even twenty two Psalms are appropriate to her (HyM 6, 17 - 27).⁷⁵

The Easterners, especially the East Syrians find fulfilment of many ‘similies and personifications’ of the Old Testament in Mary.⁷⁶ Thus in the *Wardā*, basing of the

tradition, Mary is compared to many things and persons in the OT. She is the 'Paradise' (HyM 2, 9 – 12), 'the fleshy ark of Noah' (HyM 2, 13), 'daughter of Abraham' (HyM 2, 14), 'a rock unpierced' (HyM 2, 15)⁷⁷, 'the wonderful bush' (HyM 2, 16 – 17; *Hymn for Christmas* 2[1], 12⁷⁸), 'Aron's staff' (HyM 2, 20 – 21; *Hymn for Christmas* 2[1], 13), and 'the fleece of Gideon' (HyM 2, 25; HyM 6, 67). The most interesting thing is that in the three volumes of the Chaldean *Breviarium* too, all these comparisons can be found out.⁷⁹

2.1.2 Birth of Mary

It is in HyM 4, an account of Mary's parents, Mary's birth and her growth is given. And it is almost exact to the narration given in the apocryphal, '*The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary*'.⁸⁰ The comprehensive description of the birth of Mary is as follows: The parents of Mary are Sadoq⁸¹ and Dina (HyM 4, 7 = HbvM 5⁸²), Sadoq comes from the family of David (HyM 4, 7 = HbvM 4), they had no children (HyM 4, 8 = HbvM 5), Sadoq is prevented from making offering because he had no offspring because of the 'punishment of God' (HyM 4, 10 - 12 = HbvM 6), Sadoq departs to the desert (HyM 4, 12 = HbvM 6), so Dina laments over her plight (HyM 4, 16 - 19 = HbvM 6 - 7), an angel appears to her and changes her name to Hanna and promises her a child (HyM 4, 20 = HbvM 9 - 12), Hanna praises God (HyM 4, 21 = HbvM 12), Hanna is conceived, Mary is born and she is presented in the Temple (HyM 4, 22 - 28 = HbvM 12 - 13).

2.1.3 God Fills Mary with His Grace

If God wanted Mary to be the mother of Jesus, she should be perfect to receive the Son of God and that's why she was filled with grace. When she was three years old, her parents took her to the temple and consecrated her to the Lord (HyM 4, 30). She was away from all human affairs and God was preparing her to be filled with His grace, "*la Madre del Signore degli angeli si separò da ogni cosa terrestre e abitò, gloriosa, nella dimora dei giusti, che cantavano senza pausa le lodi del Signore*" (HyM 4, 33).

He deigned to choose a pure Virgin,
And purified her, and filled with
grace (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ).

And freed her of various cravings,
Which are peculiar to women's
nature (HyM 1, 4).

Till she was 12 years of age, she was in the temple serving God (HyM 4, 35) and then she was engaged to Joseph which was another plan of God (HyM 4, 36 – 48). By filling Mary with the grace, He gave Mary the highest dignity.

2.1.4 Dignity of Mary

Mary is praised by both angels and human beings (LG 66). "She astonishes angels and she astonishes humans" (HyM 1, 39). That is the dignity of Mary. See how angel Gabriel praises Mary at the annunciation:

Peace to you, full of grace

(ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ)

Temple, full of holiness

(ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ)

Abode of Godhood

(ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ)

And second heaven

(ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ) (HyM 1, 8).

Not only angels, but humans too praise her always, "All people honour her, and all mouths praise her" (HyM 1, 42) and no creature can be compared to her

(ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ) (HyM 1,44; HyM 2, 6).

Always the author is of the consciousness that he is unworthy to give honours to her.⁸³ He says that only 'the Lord knows how to praise' her because impure mouth and tongue are unworthy to praise her (HyM 2, 4, HyM 4, *prologue*); again it is written that if we compare her majesty, we will belittle her (HyM 1, 36).

2.2 Mary and the Glorious Motherhood

It is the motherhood of Mary that gives her all the dignity and honour. She is the mother of the Divine Son, the Word Incarnate.⁸⁴ However, Mary's 'ܐܡܐ' (*fiat*) was essential for the plan of God to be accomplished, and thus happens the annunciation. The 'ܐܡܐ' (*fiat*) of Mary plays a great role in rehabilitating Man in the paradise. So to call her the 'Paradise' (HyM 2, 9 – 12) is very apt.⁸⁵

2.2.1 Annunciation

In three of the six hymns (HyM 1, 8 – 20; HyM 3; HyM 2, 40), Mary's dialogue with the angels is narrated, in a colossal way. We can see one of them which is narrated in beautiful letters.

ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ
 ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ
 ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ
 86: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ

As we have said above, these hymns were written in a situation when the people had no hope in their life. They considered that God punishes them because of their sins. So the hymn says that it is Mary's annunciation (ܐܡܐ) that gives hope (ܐܡܐ) to the beings who are amidst of sorrows (HyM 3, 16).

2.2.2 'ܐܡܐ ܕܡܝܠܬ' - Mother of the Messiah

Being the mother of the Messiah, the Son of the God, she became 'full of holiness and the sanctuary of the Godhead' (HyM 1, 11) and the 'tabernacle of the Lord' (HyM 2, 50).⁸⁷ The mysteries of Incarnation are depicted as follows:

And with the word the fleshless one
 She was blessed by the power of the
 Most High.

And there was created in her a fair
 hypostasis,

(ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ ܕܝܡܢܐ)⁸⁸

Who was the only one Son.

And the word inhabited her in secret,
 And flesh was created purely.

And one inhabited the other
 consubstantially

The secret one is wonderful in the
 manifest. (HyM 1, 21 – 22).⁸⁹

She is the amazing garden and tree who gave an amazing fruit. (HyM 2, 12). Syriac fathers especially St. Ephrem present Mary as the Garden and Jesus as the fruit.⁹⁰

She has been given a lot of titles which praises her motherhood such as mother of the Emmanuel (*HyM* 1, 41), of the Saviour (*HyM* 5, 16), of King of the Universe (*HyM* 5, 64), of the Lord (*HyM* 1, 27), of the Son of God (*HyM* 5, 14), of the Son of the Creator (*HyM* 2, 50), of the Lord of the angels (*HyM* 4, 36), etc.

2.2.3 *Mary, the Ever-Virgin*

The perpetual virginity of Mary (*HyM* 5, 36 - 68) is one of the main topics about which the Syriac fathers have written luxuriously. Aphrahat, Ephrem, Narsai and their followers, without any exception wrote immensely on the wonderful virginity of the Virgin. That may be the reason why the hymn calls her "miracle virgin" ܡܝܪܐܩܠܐ ܡܝܪܝܡܐ (*HyM* 1, 39). Mary is addressed as 'virgin' abundantly in the hymns because 'the apostles defined her as virgin' (*HyM* 1, 40) and she is the 'virgin of the virgins' (*HyM* 2, 36).

And the author says that she was virgin after the birth of Jesus (*HyM* 5, 28, 35) till her death (*HyM* 1, 42).⁹¹ (It would be a foolishness to ask whether she was not a virgin after her death). Here the influence of Mar Ephrem can be seen.⁹² Again the *HyM* 2, 5 says, "Who has seen a young virgin having grown old as a virgin!"⁹³

The traditional Syriac expressions about Mary as 'unsown soil'⁹⁴ is drawn beautifully in the *Wardā*:

She is the garden of the Divine
 (ܡܠܟܐ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܗܐ) ܡܕܝܢܐ
 Where without semen and irrigation
 (ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܗܐ)
 A vivifying fruit appeared
 (ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܗܐ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܗܐ)

Exceeding human nature
 (ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܗܐ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܗܐ) (*Hym* 1, 38).

2.2.4 *Mary, the Second Eve*

The typical typology of Mary and Eve⁹⁵ is one of the specialities of the Syriac fathers and this is explicit in Ephrem and Narsai. And the *Wardā* also goes forward with the same tradition and theology. This typology highlights the role of Mary in the plan of God. If it was the first Eve who brought death and sin into this world through her disobedience, the second Eve, Mary, brings blessings and life through her cooperation with the plan of God.

Sin came through the mother of
 everybody,
 And through it death began its reign
 over all.
 Through you this first curse
 Turns into blessing! (*HyM* 1, 10).

Again we see that it is Eve who brought death, and the new Eve brought life. The *HyM* 6, 11 - 14 (*HyM* 6, 31 - 33 too) portrays it beautifully:

*Il frutto che Eva non ha trovato,
 Maria l'ha portato e nutrito;⁹⁶ per
 mezzo del frutto desiderato, che fece
 morire Eva, Maria trovò la vita e la
 donò a tutti.
 Pur desiderandolo, Eva non potè
 trovare il frutto che Maria, velata e
 sigillata, trovò in sé; Eva non seppe
 rifuggiare il male e si attire la
 maledizione, che trasmise in eredità
 ai suoi figli.
 Maria invece, domando I sensi, fu
 esentata dalla colpa e meritò la*

liberazione per il mondo intero; aveva difatti imparato sin dall'infanzia a stare tra il safrato e l'altare.

In the Chaldean Breviary too we find a lot of parallelism between Eve and Mary.⁹⁷

2.3 Mary, the Glorious Mother, in the Church

It is God who made Mary the mother of the Church; it was God's plan on Mary in His plan of salvation. "And although you are His creature and servant, you will become mother of His humanity (ܡܪܝܡ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ) (HyM 1, 20). It is in the Church, in the assembly of the apostles, the death and the glorious transmigration of Mary happen, and the faithful in the Church commemorates her feasts and asks her intercession.

2.3.1 Mary's Death and the *Sūnāyā* (ܡܪܝܡ) (Transmigration/Assumption)

It is in the HyM 2 the *Sūnāyā* of Mary is clearly depicted.

ܡܪܝܡ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ
ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ

ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ
ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ

Coming of the angels from the heaven to take the body of Mary, and the honour made by the prophets, the apostles, Adam, Eve, the fathers of Israel, Isaiah and his comrades are all poetically narrated here. These narrations can be seen in the *Sūnāyā* apocryphal narratives too. In the HyM 6, 47 – 61 too, the death and the assumption of Mary is clearly depicted.

2.3.2 Mary's Role as Intercessor (ܡܪܝܡ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ)

The splendid words to Jesus, 'provide me with the support with the power of Your mother' (HyM 2, 3) vividly highlight the power of Mary's intercession (HyM 4, epilogue; HyM 6, epilogue) in the Church. As a liturgical assembly, the Church prays to her, "spread the wings of your prayers" (HyM 3, 18).

As we have seen, many of the hymns start or end with the request of Mary's intercession. In the *hymn on hunger, plague and lack of rain*,¹⁰⁰ we can see this role of Mary vividly.¹⁰¹ In the East Syriac tradition calamities and disasters were interpreted as God's punishment.¹⁰² Here she is considered as one who stands between man and God and it is she who beseeches Jesus for the worshippers.¹⁰³ Right in the beginning of the hymn, Mary's maternal dignity is exalted and she is asked to beseech her Son so that the worshipers might get rain.

Thus we recall her name; that she beseech our Saviour!
Raise, o mother! Raise, o mother!
Virgin pure and holy!
She who is the husbandless mother,
bring prayers for us!
Arise! Be our beseecher before Your Son, the Lord of creation,
So that He forgives thousands and myriads
of those who invoke your name in grief!¹⁰⁴

Here she is depicted as one who makes intercession (ܡܪܝܡ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ - intercessor) before Jesus. She is the intercessor. And Jesus 'will forgive' (ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ) those who invoke her name. The author substantiates his argument from the Sacred Scripture quoting the event at Cana. It was her intercession before Jesus (ܡܪܝܡ ܡܬܠܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܕܢܐ)

ܥܡܠܐ 'they have no wine') made Jesus do the miracle. Like that, when the faithful asks her intercession, Jesus would give rain¹⁰⁵ (in *HyM* 2, 28 – 29 too, the same theme is seen). "The description of Mary is focused on her dignity, which enables her to appear before God, the life Giver, and intervene with her appeal."¹⁰⁶

Another important thing we have to note here is that, other than Mary, the apostles are too asked to intercede for the people. The examples of Moses and Elijah are too explained in the hymn. But the first person who is addressed is none other than Mary and it shows her highest position in the rank of saints according to the tradition of the East Syriac Church. *Lumen Gentium* 66 says that she is offered 'a place above all angels and men'. Thus a full-fledged Mariology can be seen in the hymns of *Wardā*.¹⁰⁷

2.3.3 Feasts of Mary Mentioned in the *Wardā* Collection

There is no doubt that the Marian hymns in the *Wardā* Collection were written to be sung on the Marian feasts. In *HyM* 2,62 the existence of three Marian feasts can be seen. "And for all the assembly, which is gathered all over the Churches, celebrating three feasts for you".¹⁰⁸

The hymn says that the assembly which is gathered all over the Churches celebrates the three feasts for Mary. And the three feasts are on the 26th of December (or the second Friday after the Nativity of the Lord), on May 15 and on August 15.¹⁰⁹

And it is sure that these three feasts are those described in the *HbvM* (in the 'Six books' and the 'Five books' too). The book says that after the *Sūnāyā* of Mary, the apostles wrote down the triumphs of Mary in books and sent them into the four directions of the earth and ordered the faithful to observe the commemoration of

the Virgin Mary three times in the year.¹¹⁰ The first feast was to occur in the month of *Kanun* II (Syriac equivalent of January¹¹¹), on the eve of the Sabbath, after the feast of the Nativity of the Lord, because she departed from the world on the same day on which she gave birth to Him.¹¹² The second commemoration was to be celebrated in the month of *Iyār* (May), in the middle of the month, on the fifteenth day.¹¹³ The third commemoration is in the month of *Ab* (August), in the middle of the month, i.e., on the 15th day.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

The Book of *Wardā* stands as a connecting link between the legacy of the East Syriac tradition and the present East Syriac liturgical books. Because in the *Wardā* hymns, we can find the East Syriac theology of the early centuries which developed through the writings of Aphrahat, Mar Aprem, Mar Narsai, Isho'yahb III, etc., as well as the theology of the then period of the *Wardā* collection which have had a history of organic development. So there is no doubt that the exploration of the hymns of *Wardā* will enrich the East Syriac theology and liturgy. In the *Wardā* collection we can find a strong affirmation of the ancient theology and at the same time a development of it which happened over the centuries. However there are only a few studies on this rich and profound source. A lot of areas are still wide open to be explored such as its historical and cultural background, and its liturgical and theological dimensions. And undoubtedly the further studies will enrich the East Syriac theology.

Mariology in the *Wardā* collection is not an exception. While giving importance to the virginal motherhood of Mary, the collection highlights her other aspects such as her role in the economy of salvation, her

role as an intercessor, etc. All the life events in Mary's life, which are in the Sacred Scripture as well as in the apocryphals, are well narrated in it, i.e., from her conception till her present glorious status in heaven. So the *Wardā* has a developed Mariology based on the sacred

tradition of the East Syriac Church. Since the study attempted only to present the picture of Mary which is depicted in the *Wardā* Mariological hymns, future deeper studies will give a new approach to understand the current Mariology in the East Syriac Tradition.

End notes

¹A. PRITULA, «The Wardā Hymnological Collection», *Scrinium* 9 (2013) 317 - 327 (309 - 365). Mar Isho'yahb III (7th century) is considered to be the most important reformer of the East Syriac liturgical tradition. He collected all existent manuscripts of the Liturgy of the Hours and arranged them according to the liturgical year. He grouped them in three collections: *Hūdā* - The propers for all Sundays and movable feast days, *Gazzā* - The propers for all immovable Feast days, *Kaskūl* - The propers for all weekdays, V. PATHIKULANGARA, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, Kottayam 2000, 25; Cf. S. P. BROCK, «A Concordance to Bedjan's Breviarium Chaldaicum and Darmo's Hudra», *The Harp* 19 (2006) 117 - 136. And these three liturgical sources have been enriched over the later centuries by various reformers and they serve as the basic sources for the present *Breviarium* of the East Syriac Tradition.

²«One of the main characteristics of the earlier Syriac tradition is its predilection for expressing theology through poetry.» S. P. BROCK, «Mary in Syriac Tradition», *Urha - the Way: A Journal of Theology* 4:1 (2010) 3 (3 - 20).

³«A large body of literature produced by the Syriac Fathers [... is] between the fourth and thirteenth centuries.» S. P. BROCK, «Mary», 3.

⁴A. PRITULA, «A Hymn on Tiflis from Warda Collection: A Transformation of the Muslim Conquerors into Pagans», in *Caucasus during the Mongol Period Der Kaukasus in der Mongolenzeit*, eds. J. Tubach - S. Vashalomidze - M. Zimmer, Wiesbaden 2012, 223 (217-237); G. GHARIB - E. M. TONIOLO - L. GAMBERO - G. DI NOLA, eds., *Testi Mariani del Primo Millennio: 4 Padri e altri autori Orientali*, Roma 1991, 371.

⁵H. TEULE, «The Syriac Renaissance», in *The Syriac Renaissance* (Eastern Christian Studies 9), Paris 2010, 1 - 30; M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary in Understanding of Wardā in its Historical Context», *Parole de l'Orient* 20 (2015) 308 (303 - 320).

⁶M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 308 - 309; Cf. H. TEULE, «The Syriac Renaissance», 1 - 30.

⁷A. PRITULA, «Die Hymnensammlung Wardā und die Homilien Narsais: Wege der Syrischen Dichtung im 13. Jahrhundert », in *Orientalische Christen und Europa: Kulturbeggnung zwischen Interferenz, Partizipation und Antizipation* (Göttinger Orientforschungen I, Reihe: Syriaca 41), ed. M. Tamcke, Wiesbaden 2012, 169 (159- 171).

⁸More than «original thinkers like Mar Ephrem or Mar Narsai», these authors can be «considered translators of the subjects, legends and traditions, some of which have not survived elsewhere.» A. PRITULA, «A Hymn on Tiflis from Warda Collection», 224; A. MINGOZZI, «A Syriac Hymn on the Crusades from a Warda Collection», *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 33 (2010) 189 (187 - 203).

⁹A. MINGOZZI, «George Warda», in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. P. Brock, Piscataway 2011, 176 - 177; M. TAMCKE, «How Giwargis Warda retells biblical texts: Some remarks», in *Rewritten Bible Reconsidered*, eds. A. Laato - J. Van Ruiten, Indiana 2008, 249 - 269.

¹⁰A. PRITULA, «Die Hymnensammlung Wardā», 159 - 171; Two hymns are a 'poetic re-writing' of Narsai's hymn, A. MINGOZZI, «A Syriac Hymn», 189.

¹¹A. PRITULA, «The Wardā Hymnological Collection and Šlēmōn of Ahlā : (13th Century)», *Scrinium* 10 (2014) 149-207.

¹²*Testi Mariani*: 4, 371.

¹³A. PRITULA, «A Hymn by Givargis Warda on the Childhood of Christ», in *Die Syryoye und ihre Umwelt: 4. Deutsches Syrologen-Symposium in Trier 2004, Festgabe Wolfgang Hage zum 70. Geburtstag* (Studien zur Orientalische Kirchengeschichte 36), eds. M. Tamcke – A. Heinz, Münster 2005, 423 (423 – 451).

¹⁴M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 310; Cf. S. P. BROCK, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition*, Piscataway 2006, 81.

¹⁵M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 309.

¹⁶“As a theologian he endeavoured to provide a theological analysis of the catastrophes which the believers faced. He affirmed that God is in charge of history and that He alone is the sustainer of the world and of His people. He predicted [t]he continuation of this process and direction in his region and in his community of faith by citing the analogy of the acts of God as recounted in the biblical record of God’s people and in the history of the Syrian Church, and affirming that God is capable of involving Himself in the current order of things on behalf of His people [...]”, D. BUNDY, «Interpreter of the Acts of God and Humans: George Warda, Historian and Theologian of the 13th century», *The Harp* 10:3 (1997) 32 (19 – 32);.

¹⁷S. P. BROCK, «Mary», 3.

¹⁸D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 26. “[...] They] are not concerned with doctrinal apology. They do not assert the validity of any belief *per se*. Instead, the validity of the tradition in its entirety is affirmed as the author recounts the lives of those who created it, lived it, suffered and died in it, thereby validating it. Song, story and theology are closely intertwined. The subjective-objective distinction does not exist. His exposition is concerned with the shared faith, suffering and community which gives perspective to and creates the meaning for the individual life as that person participates in the past and present of the tradition.” p. 27.

¹⁹M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 306 – 307.

²⁰The syriac word ‘ܕܪܫܐ’ means ‘rose’. J. PAYNE SMITH, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, New York 1903, 108.

“[...] the metaphor of the rose would refer to the beauty of the verses” A. MENGOZZI, «A Syriac Hymn», 187.

²¹A. MENGOZZI, «George Warda», 176 – 177; A. PRITULA, «The Wardā Hymnological Collection», 309. Cf. A. BAUMSTRARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluss der Christlich-palästinensischen Texte*, Bonn 1922, 304 – 305.

²²A. PRITULA, «Die Hymnensammlung Wardā», 159; *Testi Mariani* 4, 370.

²³In 1852, John Badger made an English translation of a Wardā hymn on the Holy Virgin. G. P. BADGER, *The Nestorians and their Rituals: with the narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842 – 1844, and of a Late Visit to those countries in 1850, also, Researches into the Present Condition of the Syrian Jacobites, Papal Syrians, and Chaldeans and an Inquiry into the Religious Tenets of the Yezedees*, 2 vol., London 1852; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā: an East Syriac Hymnological Collection, Study and Critical Edition* (Göttinger Orientforschungen I. Reihe: Syriaca 47), Wiesbaden 2015, 3. Gabriel Cardahi published two Wardā hymns (on Mary) in 1875. G. CARDACHI, *Liber Thesauri de Arte Poetica Syrorum necnon de eorum Poetarum Vitis Carminibus*, Rome 1875; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 2. Three hymns in the Wardā collection (one on the terrors of the Mongol invasion and the other two on prophet Jonah) were published and translated into German in Aladar Deutsch’s dissertation in 1895. A. DEUTSCH, *Edition dreier syrischer Leider nach einer Handschrift der Berliner Königlich bibliothek*, Berlin 1895; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 3. Isaac Folkmann came forward with two hymns (on martyr George) in 1896. I. FOLKMANN, *Ausgewählte Nestorianischen Kirchenlieder über das Martyrium des hl. Georg*, Erlangen 1896; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 3. In 1901, Jaques Eugène Manna published another two hymns (a hymn dedicated to Mary, another on the Nativity and the last one on Man as microcosm). J. E. MANNA, *Morceaux choisis de littérature araméene*, vol. 2, Mosul 1901; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 2. Heinrich Hilgenfeld published nine Wardā hymns (four on famine and other disasters, one on the capture of the village Karmela, one reproaching the deacon who converted to Islam, and three hymns on John the Baptist, on the martyr Tahmazgerd and on the martyr Jacob of Bêt-Lāpāt) in Syriac and translated them into German. H. HILGENFELD, *Ausgewählte Gesänge des Givargis Warda von Arber. Herausgegeben mit übersetzung. Einleitung und Erklärung*, Leipzig 1904; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 3. A German translation of a hymn on Nativity was made by Bernhard Vandenhoff in 1908. B. VANDENHOFF, «Vier Geistliche Gedichte in Syrischer und neu-Syrischer Sprache aus den Berliner Handschriften Sachau 188 und 223 übersetzt und mit Einleitung versehen», *Oriens Cristianus* 1 -2 (1908) 395 – 452; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 3. In 2010, Pier Giorgio Borbone published a hymn (on the capture of the village of Karmlīš) with its Italian translation. P. G. BORBONE, «Due Episodi delle Relazioni Mongoli e Siri nel XIII secolo nella Storiografia nella Poesia Siriaca»,

Egitto e Vicino Oriente 33 (2010) 205-228; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 3. However, the studies of Anton Pritula, in the forms of articles and books, in Russian, German and English, opened different dimensions for the studies on the *Wardā* collection. In his book, *The Wardā: an East Syriac Hymnological Collection. Study and Critical Edition*, he gives the critical edition of about 30 hymns and its English translation. A. PRITULA, *The Wardā: an East Syriac Hymnological Collection. Study and Critical Edition* (Göttinger Orientforschungen I. Reihe: Syriaca 47), Wiesbaden 2015.

²⁴A. PRITULA, «An Autobiographic hymn», 230; A. BAUMSTRARK, *Geschichte*, 304, «aus Arbela».

²⁵A. PRITULA, «An Autobiographic hymn», 230. "It is mentioned only in one manuscript (Sachau 64), containing poems of different authors, to distinguish him from 'Givargis of Mosul', whose poems are also to be found in the same manuscript. The manuscript must be of a rather late type. Further H. Hilgenfeld in his work quoted a passage from a 19th century an Urmia edition book, mentioning Arbela as Warda's native town. Presently there is no evidence from earlier period. It seems likely that here we meet a typical contamination of two different persons, which often happens in literary history. Givargis of Arbela is a 10th century East Syrian Church writer. He is known as an author of different prayers and redactor of liturgical texts. His prayers are still met in Khudra side by side with Warda's hymns" p. 230 – 231.

²⁶A. PRITULA, «An Autobiographic hymn by Givargis Warda», in *Syriaca II: Beiträge zum 3. deutschen Syrologen – Symposium in Vierzehnheiligen 2002*, (Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte 33), ed. M. Tamcke, Münster 2004, 229 – 241.

²⁷A. PRITULA, «An Autobiographic hymn», 232. But *Testi Mariani* 4 considers that he was not a bishop because he had not used the title 'mār', p. 370.

²⁸A. PRITULA, «The Wardā Hymnological Collection», 341.

²⁹D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 19; S. P. BROCK, «Two Syriac Dialogue Poems on Abel and Cain», *Le Muséon* 113 (2000) 333 (333 – 375).

³⁰M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 307.

³¹A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 366; H. HILGENFELD, *Ausgewählte Gesänge*, 3; H. HILGENFELD, *Ausgewählte Gesänge*, 20 – 21; Cf. A. DEUTSCH, *Edition Drier Syrischen Lieder*, 3. 6 - 7; J. S. ASSEMANUS, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 3:1, Romae 1725, 561; A. BAUMSTRARK, *Geschichte*, 304.

³²S. P. BROCK, «Two Syriac Dialogue Poems on Abel and Cain», *Le Muséon* 113 (2000) 363; A. PRITULA, «An Autobiographic hymn», 304.

³³A. PRITULA, «Die Hymnensammlung Wardā», 159; *Testi Mariani* 4, 370.

³⁴A. PRITULA, «Die Hymnensammlung Wardā», 159.

³⁵M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 304. The Mongol invasion in the Middle east would be between 1270 and 1320. Even though the intention of this collection is not historical, there are a lot of historical events and truths depicted in them. "The popularity and preservation of the poetry and its use in the liturgy from early on indicates that the experiences described rang true with the basis of understanding how these people understood the events in which they were powerless participants and victims." D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 23.

³⁶There is a "very close imitating by different authors of all the features of the genre, associated with one poet being treated as a model. [...] This] can be ascertained for Warda collection [too], where the whole style is ascribed to one author." A. PRITULA, «A Hymn on Tiflis, 224; M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 304.

³⁷D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 21. Cf. H. HILGENFELD, *Ausgewählte Gesänge*, 7.

³⁸*Testi Mariani* 4 says that there are not less than 204 hymns or other types of literary works in this collection, p. 371.

³⁹A. PRITULA, «Die Hymnensammlung Wardā», 159.

⁴⁰D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 21.

⁴¹"Das Ziel des Autors war offensichtlich, einen Hymnensammelband für das ganze Jahr zu schaffen, womit auch die Vereinheitlichung des Metrums verbunden ist, dessen Wahl zugleich charakteristisch ist. Das Melodie-Metrum '𐤀𐤁𐤏𐤋 𐤁𐤏𐤋' mit der Strophe 7-7-7-7 Silben ist am einfachsten. Es harmoniert sehr gut mit der schlichten und einfachen Erzählweise von Gīwargīs Wardā." A. PRITULA, «Die Hymnensammlung Wardā», 168.

⁴²D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 21.

⁴³D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 21.

⁴⁴ The hymns of Wardā “serves as an effective tool of historiography and theological expressions.” D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 22. “It would appear that all of the poems, including those of historical import, were designed for liturgical functions. Certainly it is that usage and their popularity in the cultic context which provided for their preservation.” D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 22.

⁴⁵ A. MENGGOZI, «George Warda», 176. The hymns functions “as textual supports for public commemorations, as prayers of supplication, or to avert disaster.”

⁴⁶ “George Warda as an historian provides, therefore, insights into the beginning of the Mongol period of the Middle East as it affected the lives of the villagers, helpless before the invading forces.” D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 33.

⁴⁷ “The content of the liturgical collection Wardā has its ‘Sitz im Leben’ in the historical religious context, in which we can research the way of thinking of the Church also by analysing Christian notes about the lives of saints, which fulfilled their purpose mainly by strengthening the faith of the believers. The strengthening of faith becomes an up-to-date aim of the poems whenever some kind of disaster or persecution comes.” M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 309.

⁴⁸ F. S. MÜLLER, *Origo divino-apostolica Doctrinae evectionis Beatissimae Virginis ad Gloriam Coelestem quoad Corpus*, Oeniponte 1930, 145.

⁴⁹ A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 11.

⁵⁰ J. MOOLAN, *The Period of Annunciation – Nativity in the East Syrian Calendar: Its Background and Place in the Liturgical Year*, Kottayam 1985, 11–53.

⁵¹ “In the case of hagiography, guidelines and limits of response are provided within which the individual may respond in faith [...] to social and environmental pressures. Thus, George Warda told his Church that when things go wrong, the community is to remember the past dealings of God with the people of God and to act believing that God still so acts with the present faithful.” D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 32.

⁵² A. MENGGOZI, «George Warda», 176; A. PRITULA, *The Wardāba*.

⁵³ G. P. BADGER, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 2, London 1852, 25.

⁵⁴ A. PRITULA, «An Autobiographic hymn», 233.

⁵⁵ A. PRITULA, «An Autobiographic hymn», 233.

⁵⁶ D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 20; *Testi Mariani* 4, 370.

⁵⁷ A. PRITULA, «The Wardā», 317–327.

⁵⁸ M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 305–306; A. PRITULA, «A Hymn by Givargis», 423.

⁵⁹ D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 20; Cf. J. F. RAULIN, *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo*, Romae 1745, 98. (Act 3, Decree 14).

⁶⁰ “East-Syriac Mariology does not stay passive; it is a living part of the dialogue, which is being reflected in the liturgy. The image of Mary is a liturgical image, helping the believer to get to know life, personality, its nature and relation to God. The aim is to imitate the example. As such, it does not fulfill only its educational role, but it also partly reflects the interreligious relation.” M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 320. “It is not necessary to see the Mariology of East-Syria as an independent liturgical part. It does not have only liturgical content; it is an important theological device which stands close to the understanding of Trinity and Christology. Again, it is possible to observe a mixture of emotions, the intention of the Church and social conscience, which influence East-Syriac religiousness. The poems of Mary, too, can be understood as a representation of religious and ethnical identity of the East-Syriac tradition, which is experienced again and again during the liturgy.” M. NICAÏ, «The Figure of Mary», 319.

⁶¹ M. MULLASSERY, «Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the East Syriac Liturgy of the Hours», *Ephrem Theological Journal* 8 (2004) 151. The prayers contain the *credenda* of the faith, CLERUS, «Part of Mary in the Work of Redemption According to Chaldean Breviary», *The Harp* 21 (2006) 144 (135–164).

⁶² T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, «Mary in the Early Syriac Tradition», in *Marthomamargam: The Ecclesial Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, ed. A. Mekkattukunnel, Kottayam 2012, 183 (183–192).

⁶³ *Testi Mariani*: 4, 371.

⁶⁴ In the beginning of the fifth century a new literary genre in the field of the Christian apocryphal literature began to emerge which are called generally as *Transitus Mariae*. By the second half of the 5th century, in the Syriac tradition appeared certain narratives of this sort and the most famous and ancient among them are the ‘Five books’ (A. S. LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca* (Studia Sinaitica 11), Londres 1902) and the ‘Six books’ (W. WRIGHT, «The Departure of

my Lady Mary from this World», *The Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* 6 (1865) 417 – 448 (introduction and the first part of the Syriac text) and in *The Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* 7 (1865) 108 – 128 (second part of the syriac text), 129 – 160 (English translation). *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary* edited by Budge is another one, E. A. W. BUDGE, *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ which the Jews of Tiberias Made to mock at: Syriac texts*, London 1899.

⁶⁵ E. A. W. BUDGE, *The Book of the Bee: The Syriac Text edited from the Manuscripts in London, Oxford and Munich with an English Translation*, Oxford, 1886.

⁶⁶ *Testi Mariani*: 4, 371.

⁶⁷ T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, «Mary», 183.

⁶⁸ 1) 'Another one, for Lady Mary: and required for the Gospel of the summer commemoration; by Giwargis Warda' (ܩܝܘܪܓܝܫ ܐܠܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ); A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 204 – 215; = HyM 1.

2) 'Another one, for Lady Mary, by the same Giwargis Warda' (ܩܝܘܪܓܝܫ ܐܠܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ); A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 216 – 231; = HyM 2

3) 'Another one, for Lady Mary of our father Mar Yahballaha, the second catholicos, on 'O you womb' (ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ); A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 230 – 237; = HyM 3.

4) 'Inno per la commemorazione della Santa e Beata Vergine Maria (sulla sua Concezione e la sua Natività); *Testi Mariani*: 4, 373 – 377; = HyM 4.

5) 'Altro Inno di Santa Maria'; *Testi Mariani*: 4, 381 – 386 = HyM 5.

6) 'Altro Inno di Santa Maria'; *Testi Mariani*: 4, 390 – 396; = HyM 6.

The hymns in the *Testi Mariani*: 4, the italian translations of 6 Wardā Marian hymns among which five are in the thesis of P. H Bachi, which is still in manuscript (P. H. Bachi, *Marie dans la doctrine de Għiwarghis Warda d'apres les manuscrits syriacques de la Bibliothèque Vaticane. Étude historique et doctrinale*, Université Urbaniana, Roma 1957). Hym 4 and Hym 6 are mentioned in A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 21. 23.

⁶⁹ CLERUS, «Part of Mary», 142.

⁷⁰ J. OTHOTIL, «Mariology of the Syriac Churches as Sprouted from the Liturgy», *Dukrana* (2013), retrieved on 21 March 2014. <http://dukhrana.in/mariology-of-the-syriac-Churches-as-sprouted-from-the-liturgy/>

⁷¹ *Testi Mariani*: 4, 372.

⁷² In Mar Aphraht's Demonstrations 23, 51, we find similar expression, "This is a son of Adam, a body which came from Mary, who was led from us to the place of life." A. LEHTO, *The Demonstrations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage* (Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 27), Piscataway 2010, 514.

⁷³ 1 Chron 2, 13; Sirach 14, 25; Rom 15, 12; Ex 11, 11. A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 225; Aphrahat's Dem. 23, 20, A. LEHTO, *The Demonstrations*, 503.

⁷⁴ Ez 43, 1 – 4; 44, 2 – 3.

⁷⁵ "The author's ideas about Mary, her nature and her role are presented in the context of a recital of her life as he understood it, beginning with references to the Psalms and continuing to relate the community accepted details of her life and death" (Badger, suggests that 22 Psalms of David are appropriate to her. 18 are listed; 1,3,4,5,15,16,17,23,24,26,46,48,61,87,91,101,137,138, G. P. BADGER, *The Nestorians* 2, 53.), D. BUNDY, «Interpreter», 31.

⁷⁶ CLERUS, «Part of Mary», 144.

⁷⁷ "Possibly Ps 77. 15 – 20"; A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 221.

⁷⁸ A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 173.

⁷⁹ CLERUS, «Part of Mary», 144; J. OTHOTIL, «Mariology».

⁸⁰ E. A. W. BUDGE, *The History: Syriac*. A. Pritula has already proved that the accounts of the childhood of Jesus in the Wardā collection have much things in common with that of the *The History of the Virgin*. A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 115 – 120.

⁸¹ Sadoq was surnamed as Yonakhir. E. A. W. BUDGE, *The History: Syriac texts*, 5. Yonakhir is the Syriac name of Johachim which is the name of Mary's father in the Protevangelium of James. *Testi Mariani*: 4, 374.

⁸² HbvM is *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary* and the number is the page number from E. A. W. BUDGE, *The History: Syriac texts*.

⁸³ This attitude can be seen in Mar Ephrem too, "my feeble lips are inadequate to tell of your purity" (Hymns of Mary 13, 1), S. P. BROCK, *Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syriac Churches* (Mōrān 'Eth'ō 6), Kottayam 1994, 59.

⁸⁴ CLERUS, «Part of Mary», 145.

⁸⁵ M. MULLASSERY, «Mary», 158.

⁸⁶ "He sent the chief of the angelic forces and gave her message of joys, which can be neither painted nor incised in ink. The Father wrote a message, the Lord closed and sealed the word, and sent a spirit to the Virgin in the person of the chief of the angelic force" (HyM 1, 5 - 6)

⁸⁷ According to St. Ephrem, "Instead of the tabernacle of the Old Testament, which bore the presence of God, Mary is the 'symbol of the new tabernacle', the temporal tabernacle, in which was dwelling Emmanuel" (Hymns on Virginity 25, 11), J. KOCHUPARAMPIL, «Syriac Fathers on Mary and the Eucharist», *The Harp* 22 (2007) 288. Even though Narsai doesn't use the exact word 'tabernacle', he clearly says that Mary is the abode of the New Temple. He writes: "By the power of the Spirit, He willed to construct a temple in your womb. So that it might become dwelling place and he might dwell therein through good pleasure". J. KOCHUPARAMPIL, «Syriac Fathers on Mary», 293.

⁸⁸ The word 'ܡܨܚܐ' has a deeper significance more than the word 'hypostasis'. "what is two in him [Jesus] is not simply an abstract concept of a 'nature' (what the Church of the East would have called *kyana*) but this particular nature, both in Divinity and in humanity. It is not the Holy Trinity which became flesh, but *God the Son*, who is Christ; not was it 'human nature' that was united perfectly to God the Son, but *the man Christ*. This category of 'particular nature' vs 'abstract nature' is the contribution of the term *qnoma*." A. YOUNAN, *Christology in the Patristic Period* (booklet), 26.

⁸⁹ Here the hymn proves that Wardā is not merely a source which explains the history of the context, but it is definitely theological and liturgical. Christology, Mariology and all the branches of the theology are dealt with in them in the form of poetry.

⁹⁰ Mary as the Garden: Mary is a Garden, upon which the Rain of blessing descended from the Father (*Sogitha* 1), S. P. BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 69. Welcome O Garden in which is the straight Staff (*Verse Homily on the Virgin Mary*, 1), S. P. BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 139. Jesus as the Fruit: Mary has provided a sweet Fruit for humanity and in place of that bitter fruit Which Eve had plucked from the Tree, through Mary's Fruit the entire creation has received sweet delight. (Hymns on Mary, no. 1), S. P. BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 35.

⁹¹ Virginity *in partu* and *post partum*

⁹² See S. P. BROCK, *Bride of Light*, 62. In Hymns of Mary no. 15 we read "and when she died, her virginity remained intact".

⁹³ *Testi Mariani*: 4, 372.

⁹⁴ *Hymns for Christmas* 2[1], 9, A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 173.

⁹⁵ "Eve is the mother of death and Mary became the mother of life and loosened all the corruption incurred by Eve. In Mary the cause of sin became the cause of salvation. The image of God that man lost through the sin of the first parents is returned to him through Mary. The Lord made Mary, the daughter of Eve, a door to life." J. OTHOTTIL, «Mariology».

⁹⁶ The word 'nutrito' (nourished) has much implications with regard to the Eucharist. J. KOCHUPARAMPIL, «Syriac Fathers», 283 - 297.

⁹⁷ CLERUS, «Part of Mary», 141.

⁹⁸ The Syriac word used for the feast of the Assumption is ܡܬܬܠܚܐ. It derives from the verb ܡܬܠܚ. The transitive meaning of its *Pa'el* is 'to transfer', 'to take away', 'to remove', etc. The example given in *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* is 'ܡܬܬܠܚ ܐܢܝܐ' which means 'God translated him (Enoch)'. This same word is used for the migration of Mary, ܡܬܬܠܚܐ which means 'transmigration', 'transitus', 'passing', etc. Cf. J. PAYNE SMITH, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, New York 1903, 566; 586.

⁹⁹ HyM 2, 53 . 57. "The day, when happened that parting of her soul with her pure flesh, the heavenly angels moved forth in her honour in majestic movement. [...] She was transferred to the clouds and raised by the angels. And in the abode of the heavenly assembly is praised forever." A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 229 - 231.

¹⁰⁰ (ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܐܢܝܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ ܡܬܬܠܚܐ) A. PRITULA, *The Wardā*, 366. H. HILGENFELD, *Ausgewählte Gesänge*, 3.

¹¹⁴E. A. W. BUDGE, *The History: Syriac*, 118.

Spiritual Twin: Towards a Thomasine Spirituality

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Spirituality is the experience and developing of one's relationship with God. It is becoming like Christ, identifying with him by conforming our thinking, feeling, and behaviour as directed by the Holy Spirit. This article is an attempt to trace the experience and development of this relationship and identification with Christ in the life of St. Thómas the apostle, primarily based the spirituality envisioned in the gospel of John.

Is Thomas the Twin of Jesus?

Thomas, who was called the Twin (Jn 11:16; 20:24, 21:2) was known to the Syrian Christians as Judas Thomas. This is evident from the apocryphal writings like the *Acts of Thomas*, *Gospel of Thomas*, and *The Book of Thomas the Contender*. Thomas (T'omā) means "twin" in Aramaic." Didymos", is the Greek word for twin. Most probably *Didymos* was the name by which Thomas was known among the Greek-speaking Christians.

The Syrian Christians believed Judas Thomas was the twin brother of Jesus. In the 'Book of Thomas the Contender', a text detailing the dialogue between the risen Jesus and Judas Thomas before Jesus' ascension, Jesus calls him "brother," and "my twin and

true companion". It shows that there was a common belief that Thomas was Jesus' twin. But considering him as twin brother of Jesus appears far-fetched since we don't see any reference to this view in the New Testament and conventional theology.

Is Thomas a nickname?

It seems that "T'omā" was hardly ever used as a proper name in Aramaic (Freedman, 1996). So probably *Thomas/Didimos* was his nickname as Simon was called Peter (Jn 1:42), and the sons of Zebedee nicknamed Boanerges (Mk 3:17) which is indicative of their role or character; and *Judas* his proper name as suggested by the above-said apocryphal writings. Two other *Judas* (Judas son of James and Judas Iscariot among the twelve (Lk12:16) also may have paved the way for Judas (Thomas) to be called *twin* to become popular so that he could easily be distinguished from the other two.

Possibly there is another meaning. Being an apostle, Judas Thomas probably adopted Jesus' ways and teachings that he looked like Jesus." This seems to explain why John says that Thomas was called "twin". For Jesus 'anyone who hears the word of God and

does it' is his brother (Lk 8:21). In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says to Thomas, "...you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out... He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."

Francis of Assisi so closely followed the life style and teachings of Jesus that he was called "second Christ". He so resembled Jesus that people could experience the presence of Jesus in Francis. The most likely person Thomas might have been compared to would have been Jesus, and that would seem to explain why John writes that Thomas was called "the twin" in both Aramaic and Greek speaking communities. Perhaps the name 'twin' was used in this spiritual or symbolic sense for Thomas.

Is Thomas a Symbolic Name?

Probably the imitation of Jesus made him prominent among the apostles in the johannine community. We find him in leadership role when he says, "Let us also go that we may die with him." (Jn 11:16). On another occasion he speaks on behalf of all the apostles: "... Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (Jn 14:5). Thomas has been chosen from among the Twelve to give expression to the disbelief of the apostles about Jesus' resurrection. The refusal to believe the testimony of those who had seen the risen Lord is a common characteristic of the apostles (Matt 28:17; Mark 16:11, 14; Luke 24:36-43). John chose Thomas as a representative figure of the doubting apostles and the future disciples of all generations who

doubt the resurrection. Above all, the apex confession of faith, "My Lord and my God!" too is placed on the lips of Thomas. His name is mentioned in the second place after that of Peter when Jesus showed himself by the sea of Tiberias (Jn 21:2). These episodes highlight that Thomas had become the focus of reverence and prominence in the Johannine community. The apocryphal writings attributed to Judas Thomas also speak volumes about his prominence and dearness in the early Syrian communities.

Faith in Jesus cannot be reduced to believing that he existed nor is it an intellectual assent to a set of teachings Jesus proclaimed. It is a readiness to join one's life with his and choosing to give it up with him for the life of the world. Thomas' words, "Let us also go that we may die with him." (Jn 11:16) seem to be his committed confession of faith in the above sense. This readiness to be together with Jesus always—in life and even when death looms large in the horizon—perhaps earned him the nickname "twin." Of course, twins live and develop together. It is noteworthy that "Thomas, who was called the Twin" (Jn 11:16) is introduced in this context in the gospel.

One of the subtle but important features of this text (11:1- 16) is the idea of togetherness and love. Lazarus is presented not just as a friend of Jesus, he is spoken of as "*our friend*" (11:11) and Jesus says, "...*let us go to him*" (11:15). Here we can comprehend a growing sense of togetherness and love among disciples and Jesus. It is in this context Thomas tells his co-disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with him." (Jn 11:16). He is

expressing a love that not even death can deter. The twin (co-brother) is encouraging his co-disciples (sym-mathetai)—the only time this word occurs in the New Testament—to accompany him always like a twin.

This special relationship with the Risen Jesus is the hall-mark of a true disciple according to John. In this sense Thomas is a disciple par excellence and that qualifies him to be called a twin (of Jesus) who resembled and reflected and manifested the person of Jesus in his personality in the way Jesus manifested the Father (Jn 14:9), St Paul reflected Jesus (Gal 2:20) and Assisi resembled Jesus. The fact that some ancient icons of Jesus and Thomas portray them almost alike also supports this view.

The Nature of Relationship with Jesus

Here I wish to elaborate, the unique nature of a disciple's relationship with Jesus as envisaged by evangelist John which is presented in the interactions of Jesus with Thomas, the Samaritan woman, and Mary Magdalene. We shall also look into the Emmaus event (Luke).

Thomas' Encounter with the Risen Lord

In the Thomas episode (Jn 20: 24-29) Thomas, who was adamant in seeing and contacting Jesus at the physical level, is prompted to see things from a divine milieu by Jesus' entering the room when the doors were shut. This reveals that he is no more subject to the limitations of the material sphere and that he now belongs to the spiritual sphere. With this backdrop, the scene is so set to prepare for a physical bodily contact with

Jesus (Brodie, 1997) as demanded by Thomas: "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side." But the curious element in the scene is that there is no bodily contact reported. Jesus' saying to Thomas that he *saw and believed* (v. 29), and not *touched and believed*, indicates absence of physical contact.

Enraptured by the overwhelming Presence of the Risen Lord, Thomas seems to forget about putting his finger in His side; he is suddenly transported into a spiritual realm and is transformed for a spiritual contact and relationship. It is a non-physical contact at the level of faith—for he saw the man Jesus and *believed* him as his Lord and God. The response of supreme confession of faith and commitment—"My Lord and My God!"—follows immediately, most probably simultaneous with a gesture of prostration at the feet of the Lord. Prostration is the posture of worship according to the oriental custom, as the women did upon meeting the Risen Lord (Mt 28:9). The act of confession most probably accompanied by prostration reminds us of the heavenly liturgy (Rev. 4–11) in which the twenty-four elders worship God by *falling at His feet* addressing Him as "*our Lord and God*." The confession signifies a supreme moment of personal worship rendered to God who is always praised and worshipped in heaven by the four living creatures and the elders singing "*Holy, holy, holy the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come*."

Though "Lord" was often used in the gospel to refer to the earthly Jesus by disciples as a title and vocative, it was never used with

its full meaning as expressed in the kerygmatic confession, baptismal profession and other liturgical contexts—*Jesus is Lord* (1Cor12:3; Phil 2:11). The Risen Jesus is proclaimed as Yahweh, Master and Sovereign. None had ever addressed him as “God”. The nearest equivalent of the expression, in Old Testament, we find in Ps. 35:23: “My Lord and God” and in Ps. 104:1: “O Lord my God”. It appears to be a vocative, reserved for God alone. Thomas’ confession expresses a great faith-insight that equates Jesus with God himself.

The use of the personal pronoun, “My” indicates that he is not making a general and impersonal declaration of his conceptual understanding at the head level about Jesus’ lordship and divinity. It represents a very personal and intimate experience of a truth at the heart level—the truth of his belongingness to the incarnate and risen Jesus of history who is his Lord and God. The encounter with the Risen Lord transforms the master-disciple relationship to a personal face to face encounter with God himself similar to the one prophet Isaiah had (Isaiah6:5). Thomas rises above the mundane level of contacts and joins himself spiritually to the body of the Risen Jesus whom he recognized as his Lord and God in faith. This is the relationship—a relationship at the spiritual plane—of those ‘blessed/happy’ who believe without physically seeing and contacting Him at the physical plane (Jn 20: 29). Indeed they constitute almost all the believers except Jesus’ contemporaries.

Thomas episode illustrates that the Risen Lord is beyond our sensory experience.

So the world neither sees him nor knows him (Jn 14:17,18). But the disciples *see* (Jn 14:18) and *know* (in the biblical sense of experiential knowing) him because he abides with them and in them (Jn 14:17). He can only be experienced by faith through listening to the Word so that we may have life in His name (Jn 20:30-31). It is significant to note that Thomas’ confession is the ‘last word’ by a disciple of Jesus in the main body of the Gospel. There is nothing more to add; it is the culmination. Besides, in the light of Thomas episode we can trace the sequence of faith development. It starts with hearing and then follows seeing, believing, confession, worship, and commitment.

The Emmaus Episode

The Emmaus episode (Lk 24: 13-35) too confirms the trans-physical contact and relationship with the Risen Lord. One of them was Cleopas and the other is not named. The other could stand for everyone who needs to recognize the Risen Lord. The Risen Lord is not easily recognized by them as in the other apparition scenes. The disciple who starts a new relationship with Jesus has to see things in a quite different way. Physical eyes couldn’t recognize him except as a fellow-traveller. It was the same Jesus whom they had touched, spoken to, and stayed together and yet quite different that they failed to recognize him as their Lord. They looked at him with physical eyes instead of the eye of faith. When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them (v. 30). Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight (v. 31). Their eyes of faith were opened at the

breaking of the bread and with this faith-vision they recognized His Presence and the physical presence vanished from their physical vision. Fired with the new vision and spiritual encounter of the Risen Lord, they rush back with joy to proclaim the newly found Presence and relationship.

Encounter with the Samaritan Woman

A more or less similar transformation from the physical to the spiritual plane is found in the episode of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-42). It looks like a typical betrothal scene that paves the way for a physical union; but it climaxes into an epiphany. As Hagar encountered the angel of the Lord at the well of Beerlahairoi (Gen 16:7) so the Samaritan woman encounters Jesus as the Messiah (v.26) and moves to a spiritual union in faith instead of the expected physical union.

Betrothal episodes usually start when the future bridegroom or his substitute travels to a foreign land, meets a girl(s) at a well, transactions related to water take place, girl(s) rush(es) home, the to-be-groom or proxy is invited to the house, partakes in meal, and the betrothal is concluded in the house (Brodie, 1997). We see this *type* episodes in the case of Isaac and Rebecca (Gen 24:11-54), Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29:1-14), and Moses and Zipporah (Exod 2:15-22).

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, as expected in the above stories, does not lead to betrothal of a physical nature but it prepares for a betrothal of a spiritual nature—betrothal arising from faith. She believes in Jesus and the people too. It is relevant here to go through the observation of Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman III (1998).

As encounter of man and woman, the narration presents a dramatic conversation, rich in double entendre, which sets the woman's flirtation over against Jesus' altogether more spiritual grasp of the situation... Jesus' opening words are heard as a carnal overture. Behind the exchange that follows there stands not only the precedent for well as betrothal site, but also the rich biblical language of well, spring, fountain and living water as terms implying to sexual congress (Prov. 5:15-18; Song 4:15; Jer 2:13).

The people in the city invited Him to stay with them but no talk about betrothal is reported as expected in similar situations. But in the staying or abiding with them a new form of betrothal takes place—a spiritual relationship in faith beyond the physical union. There is also the invitation to the meal by the disciples in the interlude (Jn 4:31-38). Here the apostles are concerned with food at the physical level while Jesus is concerned with food, from a higher (spiritual) level, of which they do not know. Jesus is concerned with the spiritual food that establishes and nourishes spiritual relationships.

While Eliezer, Jacob and Moses found wives at the well, Jesus was bent on finding a different type of bride, who will "worship the Father in spirit and in truth". In spite of being well aware of her history of unfaithfulness, Jesus discloses himself as the bridegroom—Messiah—the one for whom she has been waiting (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman III, 1998). (The gospel of John, from its very inception, portrays Jesus as the bridegroom and humankind as the sinful bride whom he labours to bring back to Him in the same way Yahweh wished to

reclaim his unfaithful bride Israel back to faithfulness). Jesus turns the betrothal scene at the well into an opportunity/blessing for a new and fulfilling life with God.

The Story of Mary Magdalene

In Mary Magdalene's story (Jn 20:11-18) also, the move towards physical contact—"... Do not hold on to me..." gives way to the spiritual bond by believing as Thomas did. It was a gesture of her desire to relate with Jesus as a normal expression of love and respect to her master. She tries to relate to the Risen Jesus in the way she has been relating to the earthly Jesus. Jesus' addressing her "Mary" (v.16) hints to his personal and intimate relationship to her and her calling him "Teacher" (v.16) indicates her desire to continue to relate to Jesus in the pre-resurrection way. But Jesus cautions her not to approach him in that physical level and she has to learn to relate to him at a spiritual level through faith in the Risen Lord. [Indeed Magdelinerose to that level of spiritual relationship in faith, which is evident in her proclamation to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord;..." (Jn 20:18). Notice the growth in recognizing Jesus from a stranger (v.15) through master (v.16) to the Lord (v.18)]

Jesus tells her: "But go to my brothers and say to them I am ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God." Here Jesus is alluding to a new relationship between Him and his disciples. Disciples are referred to as his 'brothers'. It is evidently a spiritual brotherhood. This is further clarified by the expression—"my Father and your Father, my God and your God." God is presented as 'Father and God' of the

disciples in the same way God is 'Father and God' to Jesus. With resurrection disciples are made sons and daughters of God the Father, and brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Relationship at the Rdealm of Spirit

Pope Benedict (2011) holds that Paul refers to this type of relationship in: 2 Cor. 5:16-17. "From now on, therefore, we do not view anyone from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new." Human way of relating ceased and now we can touch Jesus only in company with the Father. If only we are "lifted up", we can touch him; we need to "ascend" to the Father with whom Jesus lives in fellowship and communion. He is close to us and can be constantly approached and contacted in the new way. Through baptism we are already lifted up to the right hand of God (Col 3:13).

Jesus speaks of this relationship in faith during his farewell speech (Jn 14:1-29). Jesus is preparing the disciples who are sad about his 'pass over'—cessation of his physical presence—to rise to a spiritual relationship beyond the physical level they were familiar with. "In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live and you also will live" (v. 19) He promises the Spirit of truth who will abide with them and will be in them, whom the world cannot receive, see or know (v. 17). He repeatedly asks them to believe in God and Him (v.1; 11, 12) to highlight the fact that this relationship is possible only through faith i. e.

at a spiritual plane. Jesus assures them that he will not leave them orphaned (v.18) but He and the Father will come and make their home with them (v. 23). Jesus here explicitly speaks of the shift in relationship from a physical plane to a spiritual plane through faith after his 'pass over' to the Father. He considers this indwelling presence and relationship better than the physical presence and contact (Jn 16:7; 20:29).

The scene of ascension at Bethany also brings to limelight his spiritual presence and relationship more enriching and exhilarating than this-worldly- presence. "While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy... (Lk 24: 5, 52). The strange thing that we observe here is that the disciples returned with great joy when Jesus parted from them! Parting generally evokes sorrow but the apostles were elated. They were elated because they believed that he is present with and above them, always and everywhere, with

extended hands-blessing, and protecting them like a roof-having transcended the limitations of space and time of mundane presence. They perceived that this relationship in the realm of the Spirit is far superior than his earthly presence and contact. This is the type of presence and relationship Jesus assured to his disciples when he said, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). This is the type of relationship, developed by faith, at the spiritual level.

In Christian life, faith implies a whole-hearted commitment of one's total self and life in freedom to do His will and plan. It is 'let go and let God'. The new knowledge derived from faith develops in us a new way of relating to God, self, others, and the world. It transforms our thinking, feeling, and behaviour and thereby transforms us into Christ. If anyone is in Christ he becomes a new creation. The Word assumes flesh in each disciple and thus incarnation continues in history. Every disciple is called to be a twin of Jesus.

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NEWS

New Apostolic Exhortation on Contemplative Life

A new Apostolic exhortation with the name '*Dei Vultum Querere*' (Seeking the Face of God) has been published on 22 July 2016. These are the new guidelines of Pope Francis in the Year of Mercy for those who lead contemplative life in the Church.

Letter to Bishops from CDF on the Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts

The Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* (The Church Rejuvenates) published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith presents the relationship between the hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life of the Church. It was published on Tuesday, 14 June, 2016.

Holy Great Council of the Orthodox Churches

The Holy and Great Council of all Orthodox Churches took place in the island of Crete from 20 to 26 June, 2016. Ecumenical Patriarch Bertholomew formally opened the proceedings of the Council. It was a gathering of the 14 orthodox autocephalous Churches after 60 years of preparation.

Presence of the Syro Malabar Church in the Synod of the Ukrainian Church

Bishop Joseph Kallarangatt represented the Syro Malabar Church in the Synod of the Ukrainian Church, held in Lviv from 04 to 11 September, 2016. He presented a paper on the heritage and theology of the Syro Malabar Church. This strengthened the mutual communion between these two Churches and opened the way for further collaboration.

Archbishop Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal as Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea

Msgr. Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal is appointed as the Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea. His episcopal Ordination took place in Christ the King Cathedral, Kottayam on Monday 25 July 2016. He is originally from the Archeparchy of Kottayam. Msgr. Vayalunkal has been in the Vatican diplomatic service since 1998. He served in Guinea Conakry, Korea, Dominican Republic, Bangladesh, Hungary and in Egypt. He did his Philosophy and Theology studies at St. Joseph's pontifical Seminary, Aluva. He obtained

a doctorate in Canon Law in 1998 from the “Santa Croce” University, Rome. At the same time he completed his diplomatic studies from Pontificia Accademia Ecclesiastica, Rome. For the last four years Msgr. Vayalunkal has been working as the First Counsellor of the Vatican Embassy and Additional delegate to the Arab League in Egypt.

New Eparchy for Syro-Malabar Church in Great Britain

A new eparchy has been erected by Pope Francis for Syro-Malabar faithful in Great Britain with its see in Preston. Msgr. Joseph Srampickal, who hails from the eparchy of Palai, is appointed as its first Bishop. He did his philosophical and theological studies in St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor and Propaganda College, Rome. He holds a licentiate in Biblical Theology from Pontifical Urban University Rome. Since 2012, he has been serving as Vice Rector of Propaganda College, Rome. His episcopal consecration will be held in North end Stadium, Preston on 09 October, 2016.

New Apostolic Visitor for Europe

Pope Francis appointed Msgr. Stephen Chirappanath, of the clergy of the eparchy of Irinjalakuda, as the Apostolic Visitor for the Syro-Malabar faithful living in Europe. After his philosophical and theological studies at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, he obtained a doctorate in moral theology at the Alphonsian Academy in Rome. Since 2011 he was the procurator to the Major Archbishop in Rome and the coordinator for the Syro Malabar faithful in Italy. His Episcopal consecration will take place on 01 November 2016 in St. Paul's Basilica, Rome.

Syro-Malabar Majorarchiepiscopal Assembly

The fourth Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Assembly was held from 25-28 August, 2016. 490 delegates, including Bishops, Priests, Religious and Laity, from the different Syro Malabar eparchies all over the world participated in it. The assembly discussed on the themes of simplicity of life, Christian witness in family life and the pastoral care of the migrant Syro Malabar faithful.

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